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**DIRECTOR  
WES CRAVEN  
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SCIENCE FICTION'S POWER 50  
THE DISNEY VILLAINS

Volume 2 Number 1





# IMAGI-MOVIES

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Our next issue will take you "BEYOND DRACULA—into the Realm of the Post-Modern Vampire." This in-depth exploration of the most vital horror sub-genre includes coverage of the making of INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE and an examination of how Anne Rice's novel overturned the cobwebby clichés in a way that promises to revitalize the genre.

The issue also includes British correspondent Alan Jones' production report on the making of MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN, executive producer Francis Ford Coppola's followup to DRACULA, starring Robert DeNiro as the Creature.

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●We'll also look at Tom Cruise as Lestat. Makeup artist Michele Burke, who transformed Gary Oldman into Dracula, performs similar duty here, but do his fans really want to see him suck Brad Pitt's neck?

●Authors Chelsea Quinn Yarbro and Suzy McKee Chamas have a lively discussion on reinventing the vampire myth for today and helping these alluring creatures adapt to the 20th century.

●Plus, Mexican vampires, classics on laser and video, and a history of music in vampire films. And lots more!

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VOLUME 2 NUMBER 1

"The Magazine of Cinematic Imagination"

FALL 1994

## CINEMAGINATION

Welcome to Volume 2: Issue 1 of *Imagi-Movies*, which means the first issue of our second year of publication. On this anniversary, instead of offering the sort of editorial masturbation about selling out on newsstands and crossing into the mainstream that you get in some genre publications, it seems like a good idea to reflect on how much of our mandate we have achieved so far.

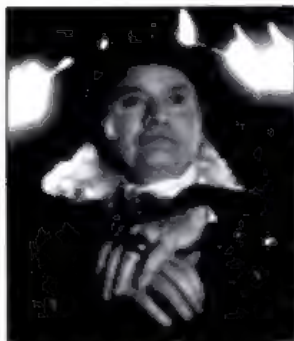
I have to admit that *IM* has only begun. We've broadened the spectrum, maybe covered a few things that wouldn't make it into our parent publication. But we haven't always managed the in-depth coverage we want, the kind that answers the too-often unasked question "Why is this worth covering?" Because that is the crux of the matter: why do these films exert such a hold over us that we want to read about them in detail? After all, people enjoy watching comedies, mysteries, and thrillers, but there are no publications dedicated to exclusively covering these film genres.

Even if we haven't answered this question, at least we ask it—often. We still get phone calls from schlock filmmakers hoping to plug their no-budget productions in our pages. Always we ask, What about this film makes it interesting? Why would anyone want to read about it?

In that sense, we can at least take credit for having escaped the knee-jerk mentality which seems to think anyone who ever rolled film (or videotape, as is often the case today) deserves a glowing profile, no matter how bad the results. Can you imagine covering restaurants like this: "The food stunk, but you'll be interested to know how it was cooked"?

No, film magazines began when the art form seemed important and vital—the artists whose work affected us so profoundly had something profound to say to us in print as well. That was our mandate: increasing appreciation and understanding of an art form we all loved. And, I like to think, even if we aren't there yet, we are heading in that direction.

Steve Biodrowski



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# SINISTER SENTINEL

## INTERNATIONAL

Hammer Films' dynamic acting duo of Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee reunited this May to celebrate their birthdays (Cushing's on the 26th, Lee's on the 27th) and to record voiceovers for a new 2-hour documentary on the production company that made them international stars, **FLESH AND BLOOD: THE HAMMER HERITAGE OF HORROR**. Although the narration had already been scripted, the two veterans were able to add the occasional personal reminiscence, such as Lee's explanation for why he kept returning to the **DRACULA** series despite repeated threats to quit: studio head Sir James Carreras (now deceased) used to call and guilt-trip the actor by saying, "Think of all the people you'll be putting out of work if you quit and we can't make the movie!"

● **A TALE OF TWO MUMMIES.** First, *Dracula*; then *Frankenstein*, *wolfmen*, and *Jekyll and Hyde*. Now, the Mummy will be the next classic monster returning to the big screen. No, not Universal's oft-mentioned remake, but a completely different project, to be helmed by Anthony Hickox at Paramount.

What happened to the remake? According to Clive Barker, "Mick Garris and I did a script that was a little too weird for Universal. It was very grim, and it wasn't a bundle of laughs. One of the problems is that, unlike vampires or the *Frankenstein Monster*, the Mummy is one of the least likely characters to scare you. There are a couple of exceptions: when Christopher Lee breaks through the French windows in the Hammer version—he was a very fast, powerful Mummy. So our version only used the Mummy as the starting place for something else."

Hickox tells me that his **MUMMY**, co-written with **HELLRAISER III** scenarist Peter Aitkins, is more in the vein of **RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK**. "We're doing Spielberg's **MUMMY**—he just doesn't know it yet," laughs the writer-director. "Actually, ours is like an Agatha Christie: there's seven people trapped in a tomb who go deeper and deeper and eventually discover the secret of Egyptian civilization. It's like **LAND THAT TIME FORGOT** and all those. It's very big, a PG-13. The Mummy is not only threatening and horrible but—there's a twist I won't tell you. It reads like a '40s comic book—high



Hammer Horror stars Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing reteamed to record narration for **FLESH AND BLOOD: THE HAMMER HERITAGE OF HORROR**.

adventure, with lots of scares, but not violent."

Although the competing **MUMMY** projects might seem like an outgrowth of the supposed rift between Barker and Hickox over **HELLRAISER III** publicity (which emphasized Barker's name despite his minimal involvement), Hickox insists this is not the case; in fact, when he and Barker appeared together at a recent publicity event, the two of them got along just like old friends. "There really isn't any animosity between Clive and me—I mean none," emphasizes Hickox. "In fact, we're talking about doing another project together. People like to make friction where there isn't any, because they don't understand."

Having worked with the "Future of Horror," Hickox would now like to work with the "Brand Name Horror" himself. "I was interested in Stephen King's 'The Mist'; I thought I could do a good job on it," he explains, intoning his next sentence like the punch line from a Monty Python routine. "I called him on it a couple of times, and he never called me back—the bastard!"

● **CRONOS** may not have crossed the Mexican border with overwhelming domestic box office success, but someone at Universal apparently noted the promise of a new genre talent at work. The film's creator, Guillermo del Toro, has two deals at the studio. The first is the occult thriller **LIST OF SEVEN**—Del Toro will probably direct, after supervising a rewrite of the script Mark (TWIN PEAKS) Frost

adapted from his own novel. The second is **SPANKY**, which Del Toro will write and direct, based on a horror novel by British writer Christopher Fowler.

● Since last issue, several developments have overturned previous reports in "Sinister Sentinel." First, Stuart Gordon has dropped out of **HELLRAISER IV**, which will now be helmed by makeup effects expert Kevin Yager. Second, Timothy Dalton, while appearing as Rhett Butler in TV's **SCARLETT**, announced that he would not be renewing his license to kill; instead, Pierce Brosnan will finally get his long awaited and well-deserved chance to play James Bond. Lastly, despite Jerry Lewis' announcement that he would be making a sequel to **THE NUTTY PROFESSOR** at Disney, what actually materialized is a remake at Universal, starring Eddie Murphy and directed by John Landis. Lewis is not involved. Stay tuned for further updates.

● Meanwhile, Lewis is appearing, along with Faye Dunaway and Johnny Depp, in a very strange black comedy, **ARIZONA DREAM**, the first American effort from Yugoslavian director Emir Kustarica. Though essentially a coming-of-age story, the film moves into genre territory with several surreal images and symbolic fantasy sequences, whose meaning remains elusive to the American star. "Don't ask me!" says Lewis. "It's so off-the-wall it's incredible. I don't know what I can tell you about it. Johnny Depp and Faye Dunaway were wonderful in it;

## EDITION

they tell me I did pretty well, too, but I couldn't even tell you what it's about. I don't know what it's going to be, but I know that Emir is a lovely man and a wonderful creator. When he did **GYPSIES** in Yugoslavia, they gave him a year-and-a-half to make it, and they backed him. Now when he comes to America, they give him a twelve-week schedule, and he didn't know what to do with it. I just hope it works out for him. It was tough for him psychologically, politically, financially. He started out with a \$15-million project that went to about \$36-million. You get a lot of people on your back for that, and I don't think they're going to get it back—I just don't know. Hey, it might take off and be one of those weird **ROCKY HORROR SHOW** cult films. Let's hope so. **CASABLANCA** it wouldn't be."

● **BRAINSCAN** registered hardly a blip on the national consciousness, but screenwriter Andrew Kevin Walker is far from comatose. Currently, he is working on an adaptation of Washington Irving's short story "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" for producer Scott (ADDAMS FAMILY) Rudin at Paramount. Walker tells correspondent Anthony Montesano: "It's a period piece but also a really bizarre detective story. In the original, the Headless Horseman isn't real; he's a prank played to get Icabod Crane out of town because of jealousy over a woman. This **SLEEPY HOLLOW** is not a 'Scooby Doo' thing; the horseman is real." □

Writer-director Guillermo del Toro is a wanted man in Hollywood since the release of his debut effort, **CRONOS**.





# MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER: THE MOTION PICTURE

## Letter writing campaign lets Universal know that the fans want their MST.

By Steve Biodrowski

*I am a PhD economist, and we PhD economists all have crystal balls (it's an endemic condition but does not hurt). Gazing deep into my crystal balls, I see a movie theater marquee with MST-3K: THE MOTION PICTURE, under which a vast multitude of people are euphorically waving fistfuls of hundred dollar bills. I see a New York Times Sunday edition page 1 headline which reads, "MST-3K:TMP grosses \$500 billion in first weekend, dwarfs all combined movie revenues in history." I see lines of related products stretching forward into the infinite mists of time: plastic model kits, comic books, silver and porcelain dinner services, custom painted mini-vans, "Crow's Choice Condoms." I see a new era of land development in Minnesota; "Bot World" supplants Disney in the Dow Jones; Lenin rises from the dead and endorses this movie to the communist world. This is my professional economic forecast. Honest.*

—Dr. George D. Choksy, Chair,  
Economics Department,  
Alma College

The above is but one of thousands of letters sent to president of Universal Pictures Casey Silver since he pulled the plug on a proposed feature version of MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000. Best Brains Productions had approached the studio 18 months ago with the motion-picture proposal, which led to a year of negotiating the deal, writing a script (based around THIS ISLAND EARTH), and planning a budget.

"We thought we had a deal, and we were ready to make this thing," says Jim Mallon, executive producer of the cult TV suc-



L to R: Gypsy, Crow, new host Mike Nelson, and Tom Servo, in MST-3K. Universal backed off making a long-anticipated theatrical version.

cess. "Then about two weeks before we were to begin preproduction in June, Casey Silver called our agent and said, 'Our TV people don't think they can recoup enough money if this thing is a flop, so the deal's off.' Our agent was upset because, normally, that kind of check with the TV department should have come months ago. Our feeling was that the Universal people, in their ivory tower in Hollywood, don't really understand the show or the phenomenon. So it was a real easy jump for us to start a letter-writing campaign. Hopefully, that gives them a sense that this project not only is a great idea but also has a built-in audience of passionate fans."

Postcards sent to MST's 40,000 fan club members elicited over 2,300 carbon copies of letters sent to Silver, urging him to greenlight MST-3K:TMP. The surprisingly wide spectrum of these letters—from parents and their children, economists, lawyers,

and other professionals—are further proof, if any was needed, of the show's broad demographic appeal. "We've been really pleased and excited with the response, but Hollywood's a tough nut to crack," says Mallon. "We're hopeful they'll reconsider, but who knows?"

Why pick on THIS ISLAND EARTH, which is a far cry from most of the drek skewered on the TV version? "We went through Universal's library and watched about 100 movies," says writer Trace Beaulieu, who also plays Dr. Forrester and Crow. "We wanted something colorful, and this had all the elements that a MYSTERY SCIENCE movie needs: goofy monsters, special effects that were state-of-the-art but now look dated, and a lot of stiff acting—the 'great' Rex Reason is the lead. It's a little bit more mainstream than some of the bottom-of-the-barrel fare that we usually get."

"But in a way it helps that

the production values are good," adds Mallon. "MST's not about showing physically poorly made movies, although we've shown enough of them; it's about commenting on what's going on inside the movie. When we get a film that has better production values, as long as it's silly premises and pretentious ideas, that adds to the experience rather than detracts from it."

If Universal fails to reconsider, Best Brains may have to set up a deal at another studio and abandon THIS ISLAND EARTH. Meanwhile, a live version of the show will be performed at the State Theatre in Minneapolis this September, as part of an MST-3K convention. "One of the reasons we want to do the movie is we know how well it works in front of a large audience," explains Beaulieu.

Mallon adds, "If the movie stalls, we may take this show on tour. The neat thing about the movie concept and the live show is that MST is fun to watch at home, but with more people it becomes an even more intense and funny experience. It may take mounting a tour before somebody will wake up and go, 'This should be made into a movie.' This is a movie that's going to be made at some point. We're thinking perhaps we're just too far ahead of Hollywood right now."

To add your voice, write to Casey Silver, Universal Studios, 100 Universal City Plaza, Universal City, CA 91608. Send a carbon copy to Best Brains, 7615 Golden Triangle Dr., Eden Prairie, MN 55344. And tell them *Imagi-Movies* sent you. □



# ULTRAMAN

**The man-in-a-suit monster-bashing adventures are remade for the '90s.**

*By Dennis Fischer*

Back in the '60s, certain areas of the country were treated to regular infusions of a giant silver-and-red superhero from space who battled what appeared to be the rejects from the regular Godzilla-Rodan-Gamera slugfests from Toho or Daiei studios. (In one memorable episode, the series actually did try to pass off the old Godzilla suit as a new monster, simply by adding a collar-like frill around the neck.) ULTRAMAN, a short-lived weekly series, became a perennial of syndication, attracting a following among fans of Japanese fantasy films. The series was created by Eiji Tsuburaya, the special effects man behind Inoshiro Honda's GODZILLA films.

Like Superman, Ultraman spends much of his time appearing to be an ordinary human being; he has a built-in limitation in that he can retain the Ultraman form within the Earth's atmosphere for only a limited interval, as measured by his chest-timer. He is supported by a group of scientists known as the WINR (Worldwide Investigate Network Response) Team which includes armory specialist Kenichi Kane (Kane Kosugi) who turns into Ultraman (Scott Rogers).

Tsuburaya Productions, the copyright holder, has attempted reviving the original series several times with mixed results.

**"Ultraman does not just pummel these creatures because they're strange. He has a heart. He says, 'OK, go back to the Lost World, or else I'll have to pound you!'"**



Series director King Wilder poses with Scott Rogers (in the Ultra-suit) on location for shooting of the new series, ULTRAMAN: THE ULTIMATE HERO.

For the first time, executive producer Norboru Tsuburaya and producers Kazuo Tsuburaya and Slugeru Watanabe have elected to remake 13 of the best-loved episodes from the original series and shoot ULTRAMAN: THE ULTIMATE HERO, the 10th ULTRA series, here in the United States for distribution worldwide.

Juliet Avola and King Wilder, who produced PUP-

PETMASTER II for Charles Band's Full Moon Productions, were approached initially by Ken Iyadomi of Tsuburaya to head up the American side of production and ended up acting as producer and director, respectively, of the entire series.

Explains Avola, "We determined that since we were going to shoot all the episodes at the same time—rather than one episode at a time like you normally would, where you would

have a director for each—we needed one director for the whole thing, so we decided that the best thing to do would be to have King direct, and me produce, all 13."

Avola admits, "Actually, King and I were pretty much totally unfamiliar with the Ultraman character before we started this project, but we're both basically children at heart. We're big superhero fans; we love action-adventure, love Disneyland, love that sort of thing, so we were real excited when we found out exactly what it was that we were to be involved with."

Why is a Japanese superhero being filmed on these shores? Wilder explains, "I've been told that Mr. Eiji Tsuburaya, the originator, who also created Godzilla, always wanted to do ULTRAMAN in Hollywood because of the quality of shows that were coming out of there. He wanted to have that look to his show. For what reason, I didn't really hear, he hadn't been able to do that. But now Eiji has been dead for years, and his son, Mora Tsuburaya, has taken over the reins of his production company and finally realized it. It was in 1989 that the first English language one was done in Australia. They finally decided, after that one, that they would take it to America, and they had to find out who they could take it to. Primarily, they wanted to do it





**Scott Rogers dons the suit and poses for action in *ULTRAMAN: THE ULTIMATE HERO*, the newest series based on the character**





Ultraman battles (below) Kemura and (above) Red King and Mrs. Red King, as the press kit calls her, though she does not appear to be wearing a wedding ring.





here to have that look of Hollywood splashed all over the place. I just wish they gave us more money."

"King and I come from Full Moon Productions," Avola adds, "so we have a lot of experience doing hard work for just the right price. Thirteen episodes all at the same time is like a year-and-a-half of our lives devoted to this. It's a long, long project."

Contracts were signed in November of 1992; preproduction began in March of 1993, and production began in June that same year. Initially, a synopsis on each episode was sent to them by Tsuburaya, and then they chose writers to transform the stories into script format. King Wilder did the teleplays for the first two episodes. The series' 13 half-hour episodes are based on favorites selected from the 39 of the original 1966 version.

"King and I watched them over and over again until we had them memorized, and then we showed each episode to the writers so that they would understand," explains Avola. "We had 9 weeks of preproduction, 14 weeks of shooting, and a week and a half of pickups of miscellaneous things we didn't get during the 14 weeks."

A requirement was that the first three episodes had to be delivered before the end of 1993, with the subsequent ten finished a half year later. Since it is becoming common practice to combine episodes of *cinéfantastique*-type series into features, Avola says she wouldn't be surprised if some of the episodes were edited together for that purpose. "Some of the episodes cut together rather well with very little transitional material, and with 3 half-hour episodes, you'd have a 90 minute feature right there."

Wilder feels Ultraman is a genuine hero for the '90s because he uses his special powers only to save Earth and avoids abusing the invaders if he can help it. "A lot of times he doesn't always set out to destroy the monster as much as to reason with the monster," says Wilder, "and he will give the monster a chance to give up and go back from where it came and stop harassing people. If the

monster resists, then he will have to bump him out and say, 'All right, you're toast,' and he'll zap him."

Wilder goes on to explain, "There are a bunch of episodes where he actually saves the monster. Sometimes the monster will die in his arms; other times he saves the monster from going over a cliff, and he will not destroy the monster because he knows that the monster sim-

ply has erred in its ways. This gives Ultraman a feeling of empathy: he's not just out there to pummel these creatures because they're weird and strange; he has a heart. He says, 'OK you're from the Lost World—go back, or else I'll have to pound you.' A lot of times the monsters do go back, but a lot of times they don't. That's what people want to see, the battles, but it's all done hopefully in a

very entertaining way and with as much logic as can be put into this kind of show."

For lovers of rock'em-sock'em Japanese-style monster bashes, **ULTRAMAN: THE ULTIMATE HERO** promises to bring back fond memories for the older generation while providing new fun and thrills to the younger generation of lovers of latex monsters and destruction derbies. □



Ultraman squares off for a showdown with Zeton, one of many monsters revamped and improved from the original series.





# You

## Director

*By Anthony P. Montesano*

Legend has it that the witches of Salem scoffed at the work of John Updike; they were unimpressed with Walt Disney, and they were outraged by Nicholas Roeg. But, when they heard that, after 159 years, Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "Young Goodman Brown" was finally coming to the screen, well, the witches welcomed the film crew with open arms. It came as a welcomed relief to writer-director Peter George (SURF NAZIS MUST DIE) that he would have the full cooperation of the community in Salem when he set out to shoot the ambitious project on a tight independent budget.

The reason: Unlike Updike's *THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK* and The Walt Disney Company's *HOCUS FOCUS*, both of which played witches for laughs, and Roeg's *THE WITCHES*, which portrayed them as fairy tale monsters, the Hawthorne adaptation is a solemn tale, which incorporates the infamous Salem Witch Trials with sympathy toward its victims.

The 1835 short story tells of Goodman Brown (played by Tom Shell in the film), an honest, God-fearing man who, one night on his walk through the woods, meets an old man (veteran actor John P. Ryan) who turns out to be the Devil. He is shown visions of a Black Mass involving not only his neigh-



After a trek in the woods, filled with strange visions (center), the Devil (John P. Ryan, top) reveals a Black Mass celebrated by Salem's citizens.



# ING GOODMAN BROWN

**Peter George adapts the devilish classic.**

bors but also his wife, Faith (Mindy Clarke). He returns to town a broken man, his belief in the goodness of his community and loved ones forever shattered. The film expands the plot by not having him sink into despair; instead, he becomes a crusader, weeding out the 'evil hypocrites,' making accusations of witchcraft against his neighbors, taking satisfaction in seeing them found guilty at the trials and executed in the gallows. Then the question arises: Were the visions real or just a trick? Did Goodman Brown play into the Devil's hands by overseeing the execution of innocent people?

"The story has a wonderful ambiguity that lets you have your cake and eat it too," says George. "In a movie, you want to see witchcraft. So you're able to see that in the story and the movie and yet have the point of view to question the reality of it all."

The independent film has been picked up by 50th Street Films, the mainstream distribution arm of Troma, who scheduled it to have a special preview showing in Salem before heading off to the Cannes Film Festival and then on to a planned fall release in the U.S.

George cut his cinematic teeth as an assistant to veteran low-budget filmmaker Fred Olen Ray (DINOSAUR ISLAND). His directorial debut came with spoof SURF NAZIS MUST DIE, which he filmed for Troma on the beaches of Southern California. For his next film, George was eager to go in a completely different direction and turned to classics

**"My faith is gone!" cried he, after one stupefied moment. "There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil! for to thee is this world given."**



For Goodman Brown, the final wrenching revelation is watching his virtuous wife, Faith (Mindy Clarke, above), accept a baptism of fire from the Devil.

for source material.

"I looked through a lot of different materials and read some of my favorite classic stories in the public domain," he says. "And, it turned out, a lot has already been done. Poe, Lovecraft, even Washington Irving. I always liked 'Goodman Brown,' from when I first read it. I found this story to be one of the best examples in American literature of the examination of Good and Evil. It works on a bunch of different levels, from entertainment to the deepest philosophical level. I was excited to discover that it had never been made in-

to a feature film. The adaptation of this story is a challenge because of its ambiguity. Somebody actually pointed out—and it stuck in the back of my head—that there was a scene in SURF NAZIS where people are dancing around a fire, and they said, 'Wow, there's a real creepy moment—it was kind of like "Young Goodman Brown."' That was years ago, and I don't know if that's what caused me to do the story or not."

Like Hawthorne himself, it turns out that George, a native New Englander, also has an ancestor who lived in New

England at the time of the Witch Trials. "Interestingly, when we were doing research for the film, I discovered that one of my ancestors was here at the time," he recounts. "The only reason it shows up in the records at all is because of a court case. My ancestor was an Irishman who got an unwed Puritan girl pregnant. He intended to marry her, but her father didn't want his daughter marrying an Irishman, so my ancestor sued the father, married the girl, and lived happily ever after."

George—who has a cameo in the film—became so friendly with the locals during filming that he encouraged some of them to be in the film as extras, playing *their* ancestors. "There were some really weird coincidences," he says. "One of our technical advisors was Richard Trask, a local archivist. The script had a bit part for a 'John Trask,' so I said to him, 'Why don't you portray your ancestor.' And he agreed, so he's in the film."

George spent over a year adapting the Hawthorne story, storyboarding the film, and researching the historical background of the Witch Trials. Following extensive pre-production on the project—which also involved finding independent investors (George himself is one of the executive producers)—George spent twelve weeks on location, scouting out authentic locales and gaining the support of the community. He insisted on shooting in Salem, Massachusetts, and was able to secure permission to film at a number of historical sights, including the home-



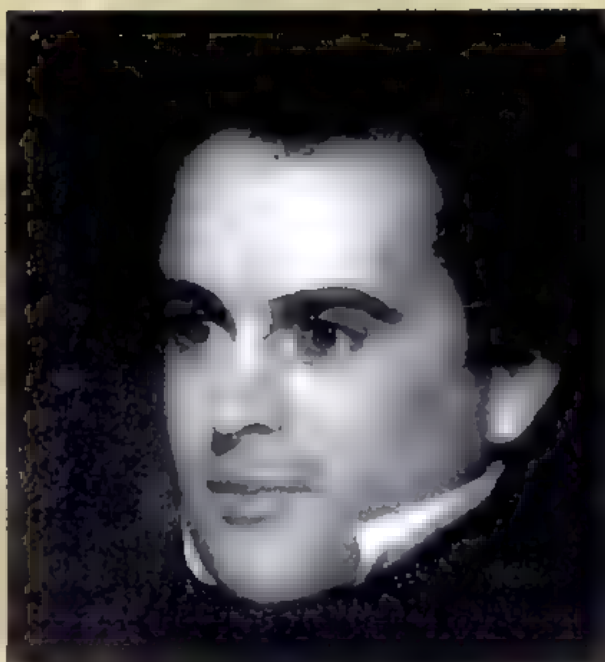
# NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

*The New England author wrote haunting tales of morality.*

By Anthony Montesano & Steve Biodrowski

"His work will remain," wrote Henry James of novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne. "It is too original and exquisite to pass away." James, himself the author of the classic ghost tale *Turn of the Screw*, went on say of Hawthorne, "No one has had just that vision of life, and no one has had a literary form that more successfully expressed his vision. He combined, in a singular degree, the spontaneity of the imagination with a haunting care for moral problems." It took 159 years for *Young Goodman Brown* to make it from the page to film, validating James's observation.

Although we don't think of Hawthorne as a horror writer in the same way we think of Edgar Allan Poe, the themes of his work are consistent with the genre, in that he would often address what philosophers like to term "the problem of Evil." In much the same way that Martin Scorsese injects the 'sin and redemption' nature of his Catholic upbringing into his best known films of street-level penance (*MEAN STREETS*, *TAXI DRIVER*, and *RAGING BULL*), Hawthorne drew from his Puritan upbringing to feed his work. His characters are often faced with 'guilt and punishment' situations. The theme of death and moral dilemma pervades such stories as "Rappaccini's Daughter," and many of them are accented with the morbid



Author Nathaniel Hawthorne

turns of a *TALES FROM THE CRYPT*-like morality. "The Birthmark" is a good example: a man tries to have a blemish removed from the face of his wife-to-be, only to discover that the successful removal has also caused her death.

Hawthorne (born in Salem, Massachusetts in 1804) devoted much of his writing to exploring the hidden recesses of the human mind. Perhaps he was led to this examination by the haunting knowledge that one of his ancestors, Judge John Hawthorne, had been among those who condemned accused witches to be executed at the infamous Salem Witch Trials (a thematic undercurrent to the short story "Young Goodman Brown," which was expanded to a central plot point in the movie). Legend has it that one of the victims cursed Judge Hawthorne and his descendants—a curse that seems to have burned itself in Hawthorne's mind. Perhaps he felt he saw that curse realized

when faced, at the age of four, with the untimely death of his sea-captain father and the withdrawal from society of his mother, who left Salem with her son for a remote Maine village.

The irony of the endorsement from the self-styled Salem Witches of today is that no witches appear in "Goodman Brown." (The currently fashionable but unsupported theory that trials were a matter of Christianity persecuting peaceful pagans was actually endorsed in the film version of *THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK*. Real pagans would have been suicidally stupid to join such an intolerant Puritan community.) Though expressed in allegorical terms, Hawthorne comes much closer to the true reality of the situation, which is that inhabitants of Salem, haunted by their own inner demons, turned on each other.

Upon his return to Salem, after attending Bowdoin College and graduating a year after his friend, U.S. President Franklin Pierce, Hawthorne himself spent 12 years of his life in almost total seclusion. Later in his career, like many writers, he was drawn to the serenity of the Berkshires, where he befriended Herman Melville (author of the *Jaws* prototype *Moby Dick*). The Hawthorne influence can certainly be seen in the genre writers who followed him, especially Edgar Allan Poe, who as a critic reviewed Hawthorne's work, and Henry James, who penned a Hawthorne biography. □

stead of Rebecca Nurse, one of the women hanged for witchcraft in 1692. "We rented props from Laurie Cabot, the official witch of Salem, who has a shop there," says George. "We talked to the witches, and they said as long as it's Nathaniel Hawthorne it was okay with them. The people who actually have the historical museum sites from *The House of Seven Gables* [a Hawthorne novel] were also concerned, and they wanted to look at the script to see what we were doing. It's a faithful adaptation of Hawthorne, so as soon as they saw what we were about, they became very involved in the project."

The logistics of trying to mount a period piece, on location, with the budget of an independent, proved a formidable but not insurmountable task. "When you think about it, this is the kind of film—like the *LAST OF THE MOHICANS*—normally produced by a major studio," says the director. "A studio would spend \$40 million on this. They're going to do *THE SCARLET LETTER* [another Hawthorne novel] with Demi Moore.

"Logistically speaking, there are several large scenes—one of the witch meetings at the end had over 100 people in the master shot," he adds. "They do it all the time in big movies, but when you look at smaller movies, there tends to be three people in a room or something, right? But we had to have this event. We pulled it off in one night, with multi-cameras, really hustling through it. A lot of

Brown screams as he sees neighbors





**“Puritanism required ongoing fervency,” says George. “So they turned on themselves. In order to see themselves as good, they had to find an evil.”**

this had to do with staying on schedule. If we didn't stay within our schedule, we were going to be sunk on this film. We planned it so, if we stayed on schedule, we could afford this—we could afford all the costumes and the extra things that a period piece needs. But there was no room to run overtime filming this. Surprisingly though, in terms of the support we were able to get in Salem, in terms of the community opening up historical sites to us, I feel that the constraints of our budget were overcome.”

Even the weather cooperated. “There was a predicted hurricane one night that was supposed to come through, when we had another large scene, with 20 people already on call. Even if we didn't shoot, we would've had to pay them because of the unions. Luckily, the hurricane just went right past us. I think that was the night we ended up getting the shot of this incredible sky that was blood red and really strange. It looks great in the movie, but I remember wondering if we were going to lose tens of thousands of dollars that night, by not being able to shoot.”

What's the universal arche-

typical appeal of devil stories like “Young Goodman Brown”? According to George, “I think that in order to be able to understand concepts like Good and Evil—the things that humanity is always struggling to grasp—in drama is to put them into human terms. In our movie, the Devil is a mysterious old man traveling along the road, who Goodman Brown is able to have a conversation with. It gives the opportunity to deal with these abstract concepts in a concrete way, by humanizing them.

“That has a lot to do with the appeal of devil stories,” he continues. “The Salem Witch Trial was a seminal event in American history, and a lot of people up there still don't want to talk about it. We might have all been Puritans if it hadn't been for the Salem Witch Hysteria. Puritanism had a lot of good aspects—even though we make fun of it now—but it was pretty much destroyed within a generation as a result of the backlash from the Witch Trials.

“The Puritan generation who held the witch trial was the third in the country,” he explains. “The first had come to conquer the land, the second



After foolishly playing into his hands, Young Goodman Brown (Tom Shell) confronts the Devil during the climactic struggle for his soul.

to settle it. But Puritanism was a religion that required an ongoing fervency. They had settled down into towns by the third generation; what were they going to do next? So they turned in on themselves. In order to see themselves as good they had to find an evil. The same sort of judgmental self-righteousness still rears its head today in acts of censorship and tragedies like Waco,

Texas. Unlike the '50s, when Communism was 'The Bogeyman,' there are so many things happening today. Everyone is sort of struggling with the fact that we no longer have that Communist Bogeyman. We can't identify the enemy as easily anymore. So the enemy becomes ourselves. Which is at the heart of 'Goodman Brown' and many of Hawthorne's stories.”

consorting with demonic visions. The night's journey climaxes with a vision of the entire populace of the town taking part in a horrific Black Mass ceremony.





# WES CRAVEN'S NEW NIGHTMARE

**The franchise creator takes another lucid dreamwalk down Elm Street.**

*By Dale Kutzera*

C'mon, you didn't really expect New Line Cinema to terminate its second most profitable franchise, did you? Of course, the demise of Freddy Krueger seemed reasonably certain when, in the last *ELM STREET* film, he was dragged kicking and screaming from the dreams of his long-lost daughter into reality, impaled with a stick of dynamite, and blown to bits. The title, *FREDDY'S DEAD: THE FINAL NIGHTMARE*, was about as conclusive as you can get, and even the executives at New Line Cinema insisted the series had run its course.

"No one was jumping up and down to do another one," says Michael De Luca, President and Chief Operating Officer of New Line Productions. "Being a company that is always mindful of franchises, whether it is *HOUSE PARTY*, the *TURTLES*, or *ELM STREET*, we are always looking for ways to keep the franchises going. I liked a lot of the sequels. I think they are very innovative, very visual, and have launched a lot of good directors, but nothing beats the original. We didn't want to do another one with anybody else but Wes. Doing just another sequel didn't seem worth it,



Wes Craven, Heather Langenkamp, and Miko Hughes relax behind the scenes of the latest Elm Street odyssey.

but getting a chance to do a reinvention with the creator of the original was too good to pass up."

For years, Craven had had nothing to do with the *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* series, having moved on to create such distinctive films as *SHOCKER*, *THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW* and *THE PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS*. His last involvement

with Freddy Krueger was the script he and Bruce Wagner wrote for the third film. "It was re-written by the director and a friend of his [Chuck Russell and Frank Darabont], and I didn't have anything to do with the production of that, so I have been away for about ten years," Craven recounts. "I don't know exactly what their [New Line's] reasons were, but they were just intrigued by the

idea of whether a new film could be done, and I was intrigued, too."

Since its \$550 million acquisition by cable-TV tycoon Ted Turner in 1993, New Line has been paying top dollar for spec scripts, name directors, and A-list actors. Far from the tight-fisted, struggling company that gambled on Craven's original *NIGHTMARE* ten years ago, the cash-rich New





Line was more than willing to negotiate a new, lucrative deal with Craven to bring him back into the Freddy business. "It was all contingent on my demands being met and my being satisfied with the deal," Craven explains. "We cleaned up a lot of business matters between us that were irksome, to put it mildly, and they were very forthright about that. This time, as opposed to the first time out, I had an excellent lawyer and he made a great deal."

"They gave him a lot of freedom," says Heather Langenkamp, heroine of the first and third films. "I don't think I ever saw a New Line executive on our set. On our first movie and third movie, they were always there, everyday, constantly breathing down our necks. On this movie, I didn't see them once. They trusted Wes. He was bringing them a product they desperately wanted, and they were willing to make some accommodations for that."

Having killed Freddy Krueger rather decisively in PART VI, what New Line wanted was a way of rejuvenating the ELM STREET series without insulting its fans. "At the time they made the proposal I had no idea what kind of film to make," admits Craven. "The



The reports of his death greatly exaggerated, Freddy Krueger returns, with Robert Englund back under the makeup.



challenge was to think of a way to bring Freddy back without violating the nature of the story or offending the audience. The first thing I did was have lunch with Heather who I hadn't seen in a long time, just to catch up and see if she was interested in making another film. For my taste, she always represented the best of the NIGHTMARE series.

"The first one was an examination of somebody who had the courage to face a truth that was too painful for most people to even acknowledge, and I thought rather than make up some story it would be more true to see how she was dealing with the same issue ten years later. That was the notion I called the lunch on, but what I found interesting was that she had a story within her own life that was so fascinating."

"We just had a casual lunch and talked about all sorts of different things," recalls Langenkamp. "I'm a mother now, so we talked about parenthood. He told me that he started having some new dreams to fuel a new script, and we talked about potential scenarios for a new NIGHTMARE movie. And we started talking about things that have been going on in my life over the past few years and about how I had a disturbing fan who had

Robert Englund plays himself in the new film, here seen while feeling compelled to paint a recurring nightmare.



## ELM STREET SEQUEL ENNUI

**"Nobody was jumping up and down to do another one," says chief Michael DeLuca. "But a chance to do a reinvention with the original creator was too good to pass up."**



Chuck (Matt Winston), Terry (Rob LaBelle), Chase (David Newsum), Dylan (Miko Hughes), and Heather Langenkamp inspect the claw. Inset: Chuck (Winston) gets "clawed."



been writing me some pretty scary letters. It's been over for a while now and I've been breathing easier, but right after I did the TV show (JUST THE TEN OF US), I had some very frightening episodes with a kind of stalking fan. In one way the person was obviously very sad and had no grip on reality, but on the other hand you're not sure what they're capable of, so you're always watching your back. I told Wes things started bothering me that never would have before. For instance, if a car followed me for a mile, I'd start getting jittery. He thought that was an interesting idea."

"She was very frank and open with me about what had been going on in her life for the past ten years," Craven continues. "I was intrigued with the idea of doing a story based on events in her life as an actress who had made a horror film, which a lot of our society looks down on—what the influence of that was on her and also on her child. After we had that lunch, I started having very strange dreams about her, Freddy in general, the impact he's had on myself, and what it's like making a horror film."

"Last summer, Wes called me up and said he had completed a draft of the script, and he wanted to know if I minded that it was about me, with my name. I would play myself," Langenkamp explains. "At first, it was a really strange idea to play yourself in a film. It didn't sit well with me in the beginning, and Wes and I had several conversations. The script was wonderful, but I have just become so protective of my personal life that to play myself with my real name presented some real problems to me. Legally you give up so much in

terms of what New Line Cinema can do with your name. Can they put it on any doll? And what does that mean for Heather Langenkamp, the person? There was a lot of thinking about those kinds of issues, but Wes was so committed to his idea and this nightmare was so scary and good that I decided it would be worth it, so I agreed to do it."

**T**he resulting movie within a movie is so unlike any other ELM STREET film that New Line won't even market it as one. The trailer shown to exhibitors at the ShoWest Convention in Las Vegas in March of 1994 had no mention of Freddy Krueger until the final image, when he bursts through a melting film frame caught in a projector light, and some versions don't even include that. The working title, WES

CRAVEN'S NEW NIGHTMARE simultaneously links and distances the film from its predecessors, a clever stroke by New Line's marketing department to keep the series' established market, while selling the film (which reportedly plays more like a psychological thriller than a horror movie), to a broader audience.

"The film has to do with Heather Langenkamp the actress in Hollywood," says Englund. "It's about her life as an actress, her friends, her child, and whether or not she will be wooed into doing another one

In the NEW NIGHTMARE, Freddy's infamous finger knives are even more impressively lethal, actually resembling the poster art for the original film.





# CRAVEN'S NIGHTMARE

## BULKING UP FREDDY

*Dave Miller designed a muscular, meaner look.*

By Tim Prokop

Wes Craven originally envisaged Freddy as an incredibly strong force of evil with tremendous physical presence. While the evil was retained throughout the NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET series, Craven felt that the character became less imposing in the later films, and less of a



Left: Makeup artist Dave Miller applies Freddy's new look (seen above) to Englund. Says Miller, "Wes wanted Freddy to be more muscular, with a thicker neck, longer jaw, and meaner brow."

physical threat to the people around him.

To solve the problem, Craven turned to makeup effects artist David Miller, creator of Freddy's incinerated appearance in the original NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET. Craven asked Miller to redesign the character and deliver a bigger, stronger, meaner-looking Freddy than had been seen before.

"He came to me with a simple sketch that was drawn by Bingham, the artist who did most of the drawings for the *Nightmare on Elm Street* comic series," says Miller. "Wes wanted Freddy to be more muscular, with a thicker neck,

films, and Wes was trying to bring the character back to the Freddy he had in mind when he was writing NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET."

Miller worked with the sketch, redesigned it to suit the makeup he wanted to create, and met with Craven to discuss the changes. "The sketch had these big gaps in Freddy's skin, so it was more of an open flesh look than that of a burn victim," explains Miller. "I wanted to put a real muscle structure underneath those gaps, but Wes wanted a more stylized look for the character. He wanted all of the muscles to be radiating outward from Freddy's eyes, 'like

longer jaw, and meaner brow. He looked kind of wimpy in some of the later

his eyes are the sun and the muscles are the rays of light.' Having studied anatomy books, I was concerned that it wouldn't look realistic, but Wes was specific. After a while it grew on me, and I ended up liking it."

In 1984, Miller created and applied Freddy's original burn makeup for the film that launched the series, *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* (below).



To create the makeup, Miller started with a lifecast of Robert Englund he made for the upcoming adaptation of Stephen King's *The Mangler* (directed by Tobe Hooper). Miller sculpted in clay on the lifecast until he was satisfied with the design, then cast the foam latex appliances that transform Englund into the new and improved Freddy Krueger.

"Most of the makeup is one piece that stretched over his head and wrapped around his neck, but was open in the front like a ski mask," says Miller. "Then I added a separate nose and upper lip piece and a chin piece. I added some small thin appliances around his eyes to create the muscle striation Wes wanted and a very thin appliance to his upper lip. Having these small pieces around his eyes and mouth gave Robert a greater range of expression when he performed in the makeup."



The hood piece was also made thinner across the forehead and cheeks, to show the movement of the actor's face beneath the foam rubber. The piece was thickest around Englund's neck, adding nearly an inch of foam to create the beefier look Craven requested. "In some of the later films his neck looked



really skinny, which took a lot of impact away from the character," explains Miller. "I also made his head larger and gave him a stronger jawline. There's an actual jaw there, which Robert didn't really have before."

To prevent the larger head and neck from appearing out of place Miller blended it into a padded muscle suit created by costume designer Mary Jane Fort. "The suit that covered Robert's upper torso and shoulders was a nice piece of work; it looked and moved like real muscles, even when he wore a thin shirt," says Miller. "When it was combined with the makeup, Robert looked like a body builder, which he definitely isn't in real life."

The colors Miller used to paint the makeup are similar to



Throughout five previous sequels, including *DREAM WARRIORS* (above), Freddy's makeup had continually evolved. Of the current look (inset), Miller says, "He looked kind of wimpy in some of the later films, and Wes was trying to bring the character back to what he had in mind when writing *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*."

those he chose for the first *ELM STREET*, giving Freddy a darker complexion than in the later films. "I used a combination of dark skin tones and purple shading to give him a darker look, which is one of the things Wes liked about the character in the first film. I also added a lot of mottling, so it looks like his skin is translucent and there's stuff going on underneath it. It makes it look more interesting than if it was just a flat surface of skin."

The finishing touch for the makeup came with the addi-

tion of contact lenses created by Body Tech that cover both the whites and the pupils of Englund's eyes. "Wes wanted his eyes to be pure white around this tiny black pupil so we had to cover up his entire eye," explains Miller. "The technology for contact lenses has come a long way in the last few years—it used to be all hard lenses and when they're this large it would have been like putting a rock in his eye. The soft lenses fit in easily and they worked really well with the makeup—his

eyes look very intense and they really show up well in dark lighting. Since Freddy's a creature of the night this was not only effective, but very appropriate to the character."

Surprisingly Miller was able to effect the transformation from Robert Englund to Freddy Krueger in a little over an hour and a half, as opposed to the four hours it took him to create the character for the first film. "The first film took a long time because there were so many separate pieces, which forced me to spend time gluing, blending and painting. This makeup was easier because it's mostly one piece with all the detail sculpted into it. We were also able to pre-paint the main piece before each session to shorten the time in makeup."

WES CRAVEN'S NEW *NIGHTMARE* was also easier in terms of the number of days that Miller was required to apply the makeup to Robert Englund. "Robert appears with and without makeup in the film, so there were only about ten days in total that I had to make him up. In *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*, every time you see him he's covered in rubber, so in comparison this was kind of a breeze."

The film completed, Miller is happy with the new look for Freddy, and feels it is a definite improvement on the makeup he created for the fifth and sixth films in the *ELM STREET* franchise. "The series had become so successful that for those films I basically had to stick with the commercial style of Freddy which had moved a long way from the original concept. I was pretty restricted in what I was able to do, so it was very rewarding to design a new Freddy who is more intimidating than I was able to make him in the last two films. It was also great working with Wes again, because he really knows how to work with the character and make Freddy far scarier than a guy in rubber makeup." [ ]



of these NIGHTMARE movies. Then these odd things occur, and it's hard to decipher whether they are reality or illusion, whether she's being manipulated by Wes and myself, whether it's a stalker, or maybe it's you-know-who in reality."

"I thought that Wes would have to do something really special not to insult the intelligence of his fans, and when I read the first draft of the script I knew we did not have that problem at all," says Langenkamp. "What Wes has done is so original. This is really like a documentary about the people who make ELM STREET movies. Everyone is in it: Bob Shaye, the President of New Line, Wes and I, and Robert Englund. We all play ourselves, and we're all dealing with this prospect of making the last, fabulous sequel of the NIGHTMARE films. We were really living this script day by day, and the way we were making the movie is very much how it looks on film. What makes it so scary is that for some reason Freddy is able to penetrate to that world. He is more shadowy and hidden, and you don't know where he's going to pop up. It involves dreams again and where reality ends and dreams begin, and that scary line between the two."

Amanda Wyss in the chilling anti-gravity nightmare from the original—an image recreated in the new film.



## ELM STREET SELF-REFLEXIVITY

**"We wanted to know if I minded that the script was about me," says Langenkamp. "It was a really strange idea to play myself, but Wes was so committed to his idea I agreed."**



Hughes, playing Langenkamp's on-screen son, finds himself the unfortunate object of Freddy's long-armed aggression—a typically surreal effect.

**T**he new approach required a new incarnation of Freddy, forcing Craven to dig deep into his concept of good and evil. "I actually have a scene in the film where I say that Freddy was an entity that has been around for a very long time and stood for something that probably went back to the very roots of mankind. And in each age storytellers try to grab on to these elements that are mysterious and hidden and give them shape and give them names. In my case I called it Freddy and by clothing it in the costume of Freddy and the stories of the NIGHTMARE series it has been controlled. But when the films had been stopped, when they killed off the character, the entity was left alive and it decided to cross over into our lives and our dreams. The story really is about that. It's about the Freddy that can't be killed off by some executive deciding that they've made the last NIGHTMARE."

The new Freddy is a purer, more evil incarnation of the

character we know. A new make-up design has the face and head deeply lacerated, with broad swaths of skin missing entirely, revealing red sinews of muscle. Gone are the brightly colored stripes of the sweater, replaced by more muted tones, tall leather boots, and an imposing purple top coat. Most noticeable is the replacement of Freddy's famous scissored glove with a new hand design that fuses blades into a skinless hand of exposed bone and flesh.

"We're trying to get a sense of dealing with something that is not Robert Englund in a costume, so it couldn't be completely familiar," says Craven. "It's based on the old costume, but different. There was a change of his facial make-up and the construction of the whole head, a different costume based on the colors and stripes of Freddy, and a new more primal claw. We wanted to say that's the guy that's been behind the old Freddy."

Production began in November of 1993, and through the course of the shoot Craven couldn't help revising his script

as inspiration warranted, resulting in the unusual practice of re-writing a film about the making of a film as the film was being made. If this sounds confusing, consider the challenge to the actors of making a film about themselves making a film. "That's the hardest thing in the world," claims Englund. "I don't play me too often. I'm a character actor, and I did a lot of work before Freddy and during Freddy with my own face but mostly in character roles. I always wanted to dye my hair and get a pair of glasses, be a little taller or shorter, or impose an accent. Freddy allowed me to do a lot of tricks, and it's kind of liberating to work under the makeup."

"I did make a real point not to portray myself," says Langenkamp, who created a fictionalized version of herself for the film. "The overriding theme of this movie is not only that Heather is an actress but that Heather is a mother, and I really tried to imbue her with acute sensibilities about her child. She's very tuned in to her kid and is willing to sacrifice everything for the welfare of her child. The one note I tried to play in every scene is that Nancy from the first movie has grown up and she's Heather as an adult. Her strengths are Heather's strengths, and the thing that gives me strength in this movie is the fact that I'm a mother of a very vulnerable child."

For Craven, the challenge was not only playing himself but directing some of the numerous non-actors who make cameos in the film, including his boss, Robert Shaye. "The worst qualms about that was after his scene was done he was immediately talking about re-shoots, because he thought he was terrible. In fact, he was quite good. Directing myself was a trip. I had done one other acting piece in John Carpenter's BODY BAGS pilot. Before that I had only done small cameos. I've heard other directors who do it a lot, like Clint Eastwood and Woody Allen, say you just have to rely on people that you trust, in this case Marianne Maddalena, one of my producers, and my d.p. Mark Irwin.



# CRAVEN'S NIGHTMARE

## DREAM DIRECTOR

*Craven's dreams are not just a plot device but a source of inspiration.*

By Dale Kutzera

"I think that movies are very much a dream of society," says writer-director Wes Craven, the father of Freddy Krueger and the creator of one of horror's most durable franchise offerings, *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*. "The theater is one of the few places where groups of people enter a dreamlike state. The lights go down, and we look at shadows on a wall and become completely involved to the point where we stand up and cheer, or weep, or leap out of our seats, knowing full well that it is just shadows on a wall."

Dreams have long been a source of inspiration for the unique shadows Wes Craven creates. They are the central theme of the *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* films and have served as a valued off-screen tool dating back to *DEADLY BLESSING* (1979) when he was faced with a particularly difficult scene. "It was the classic Hitchcock shower scene—the heroine in the shower, the steam, the figure on the other side of the shower curtain—and I said I can't do this and hold my head up. So the day before we were going to shoot it, I dreamed the entire scene as it appears in the movie, complete with fades, color and everything. I woke up and wrote it all down, and we shot that version. It worked beautifully."

In the years since *DEADLY BLESSING*, Craven has given a great deal of thought to the scientific and cultural significance of dreaming. The notion of an alternate state of consciousness fascinated him. He found dreams, though largely unexplored in western culture, play a significant role in other cultures such as the Australian

bush men or the Balinese, who teach their children a system of dream skills. Craven explains that if a Balinese child has the classic dream of falling, they are taught to dream of falling again, but to fall through the earth to a land where they can demand a prize. "They get a whole body of poetry, songs and pictures from that dream. It's a positive way of approaching dreaming rather than thinking it's something mysterious."

Craven has used the unique art of dreaming on all of his subsequent films, tapping into his subconscious to great effect in such efforts as *THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW* and *THE PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS*. Over the years, he has trained himself to remember his dreams after waking and quickly record them on a notepad or tape recorder by his bed. In some instances, he has even been able to control his dreams, reviewing particular passages to remember the details. "The most dramatic incidence was when I was at a film festival in Brussels. I woke up at about 4 in the morning after having dreamed the entire outline of *PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS*, and reviewed it

twice while still in the dream, aware that I was Wes Craven, the filmmaker, and that I was dreaming." The dream provided Craven with the solution to a script that had puzzled him for twelve years.

In 1978, Craven's interest in dreams led him to a series of news reports which served as the inspiration for the original *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*. The articles detailed the mysterious case of three boys who, after experiencing a horrific nightmare one night, died the next time they slept. "The last time it happened the kid literally tried to stay awake as long as he could. His family was very concerned. He was getting more and more distraught. The doctor prescribed sleeping pills and he threw them away. They gave him warm milk and he threw it in the sink. Finally, he fell asleep and the whole family breathed a sigh of relief. Then in the middle of the night they heard screams and ran in and found him dead."

It is no wonder that Craven's films have a singularly surreal quality, one that other *NIGHTMARE* directors never quite achieved. The task of putting dreams on film is one that even Craven can't completely explain. "I'm not sure I even understand it. Basically I say what are the bulwarks of



Director Wes Craven and actress Heather Langenkamp pose on the *NIGHTMARE* set.

Craven rehearses with the young co-star of his movie, Miko Hughes, while director of photography Mark Irwin (center) prepares to set up the shot.





consciousness, the rocks of Gibraltar we depend on? If you punch a wall it will hurt. Gravity is pinning your feet at the ground. Night is night and day is day. I realized in dreams none of that is true. When Freddy strikes gravity would be abrogated. There's that terrifying scene of the girl being dragged up the wall and over the ceiling. People found that very upsetting because it violated the basic rule that you can't go up the wall and over the ceiling without something holding you or being on a ladder.

"Dreams are very elastic and you can float or fall or fly depending on what is going on in the texture of the dream. Whatever is happening to the character depends on their level of consciousness. So if you are awake Freddy can't get you, because Freddy represents the thing that can only get you when you're asleep. However, if you're fighting sleep and are half-asleep and half-awake, then he can impinge on your world. There's a scene, for instance, where Nancy is half-asleep in bed when Freddy starts to press through the wall. To me that makes perfect sense because she was half-asleep and half-awake."

The elaborate ground-rules Craven established for Freddy and his dream-time attacks were often violated in later NIGHTMARE films. He faults the second film, in particular, for bringing Freddy into the real world and diminishing his stature by placing him opposite taller actors. Later sequels further eroded the image of Freddy as evil personified, opting for Freddy as king of the one-liners.

Looking at PART VI, wherein a gaggle of forgettable teens are dispatched in no meaningful order, it is difficult to remember that Freddy started out as a shadowy villain to Heather Langenkamp's strong heroine. "Wes created a wonderful movie ten years ago and look at where it's gone," says Langenkamp "It's on the tangent where Freddy has become this humorous, funny, strange icon of sadistic humor. Freddy is the hero and the heroines are second class citizens in these [sequel] movies. I don't think anybody had been satisfied with how the characters had been put to rest in a way."

WES CRAVEN'S NEW NIGHTMARE marks the return not only of the old dark Freddy, but of a worthy heroine in the form of Heather Langenkamp. "Without getting too pompous about it, I think the first one was an examination of states of consciousness, if you will," says Craven, "and

## SCREEN DREAMS

**"I think that movies are very much a dream of society," says Craven. "The theatre is a place where groups of people enter a dream-like state and watch shadows on a wall."**



Heather Langenkamp, Robert Englund, and Wes Craven are reunited on an ELM STREET film for the first time since the original NIGHTMARE in 1984.

how much we avoid the truth in our daily lives, everything from the person you marry, to the job you take, to what you want to believe about your government, to a hundred thousand other things. But the heroic people, like Martin Luther King Jr., say we must do something about it. Everybody else is saying don't make waves, but the heroic person follows his or her own vision of what is true. The real nature of a hero is someone who faces the truth and acknowledges it.

"In the first NIGHTMARE Nancy saw something happening based on a crime of their parents. The parents were in collusion to hide it. Her friends were in denial, taking all sorts of ways away from reality—drinking, sex, drugs, whatever—and she was the only one that had the guts to say 'I saw this and I have to figure out how to confront it.' That's a real hero we can all relate to."

Craven used his return to the NIGHTMARE realm to broaden his favorite theme of dreams by touching on the parallels between personal dreams and the collective dreams we experience in the films we see. "Since this was historically a film about dreaming, I felt it would be wonderful to do a film about the dreamlike state of films themselves and how the life of an actress and the character she plays are sort of mirror images of a single persona in two different states. That was the notion for making this film and what happened is I

started having dreams of the film, and of Freddy and what Freddy might really be both as a character and as something I real latched onto ten years ago."

Craven followed his dreams throughout the course of filming, often incorporating actual incidents of the real shoot into the cinematic depiction of the film's production. "The tricky part came when we were ready to shoot and I was still writing down scenes and new scenes were coming to me, which made New Line crazy. It was a pretty bold experiment just in the sense of filming what was happening in my dream life even if it hadn't been dreamed yet. We had a loose schedule, and in some way the dreams came through on time."

So did the production. Despite the unique level of improvisation, and a week-long shut down after the January 17 earthquake, NEW NIGHTMARE came in ahead of schedule due largely, according to Langenkamp, to Craven's growth as a filmmaker and confidence in the story he was telling. "His experience was so much greater than on the first movie," says Langenkamp. "I'm sure that made a difference. He story-boarded the whole movie so you never got the feeling they were shooting too much film on a scene. I told the day-players to be ready to get it in the first take. Some directors make you do something a hundred times and are still not satisfied, but after one or two takes Wes would say, 'Okay, that's fine. Let's move on.' I've never seen a director so proud and confident of his work."

Craven credits the smooth production to director of photography Mark Irwin and editor Patrick Lucay with whom he worked on his short-lived series NIGHTMARE CAFE. Using a Lightworks digital editing system, Lucay edited each sequence, complete with music and sound effects, within days of its filming. Screenings of the assembled footage were open to the entire crew, part of Craven's remarkably open, egalitarian directing style. "Something I've been learning as a director over the years, and really came out in full force on this film is that everybody is part of the creative process. It's bullshit to think that you're the auteur and nobody else knows what's what. On the other hand, it's a very mature film in the sense that it was done under unusually creative circumstances and there was never any doubt about what I needed and what I didn't. I'm very excited about it."

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"I've always had a pretty strong appreciation for actors that do characters besides themselves," Craven continues. "I mean it's easy enough for me to talk as myself but not to do another character or reach some of the emotional pitches that actors are routinely asked to do. In this film Heather runs the gamut from tenderness to terror to outrage. I've always been astonished by the ability to put yourself into those kinds of stages."

# CRAVEN'S NIGHTMARE

## ELM STREET ACTRESS

*Art imitates life for Heather Langenkamp.*

By Dale Kutzera

**F**urther blurring the line between art and reality were several bizarre occurrences during the course of filming. "Things would disappear and resurface in other places; right when we were ready to shoot, the lights would go off—stuff like that," says Langenkamp. "It was bizarre, but we all banded together and kind of laughed about it nervously. The biggest thing was the screenplay, which was written last summer, opens on a terrible earthquake, and we shot our earthquake scenes just before the [January 17] earthquake. It was so fantastic. I got cold shivers. That to me is just a greatest symbol of how something strange was lurking beneath this Freddy movie."

An unforeseen benefit of the 6.8 Los Angeles trembler was confirming to Craven that the

Making a movie about making a movie is not a completely new idea. A *STAR IS BORN* set the classic example with such varied works as *SINGIN' IN THE RAIN*, *THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL* and *THE PLAYER* providing variations on the theme. Never before, however, has a film gone to the extremes of having an actress portray herself in a film populated with the actors, directors, and studio executives with whom she works, most of them playing themselves.

WES CRAVEN'S NEW *NIGHTMARE* does all this and more, using elements of actress Heather Langenkamp's real life to create a surreal vision where the lines are blurred between actress and character, film and reality, dream and nightmare. Even the set of Langenkamp's house is so close to the original that her friends may think those scenes were shot on location. The result may be as much a portrait of an actress's life in Hollywood as it is a horror film. It's a role Langenkamp has been living for the past ten years and one she has been waiting a long time to play.

Since the original *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*, the actress worked steadily (most notably in the moderately successful sit-com *JUST THE TEN OF US*), without ever regaining



Heather Langenkamp's real-life story served as the inspiration for a reel-life story in Craven's script.

caused him to be replaced by Chuck Russell, who toned down the Nancy character from an independent fighter to a nearly emotionless woman. "Chuck wanted to present my character as a cool, strong personality," she says. "I can relate to the idea, but on film it came across too dispassionate. One critic referred to my performance as callow, and I agree. Her emotional depth wasn't as great as I would have liked. Every time I tried to make her bolder, Chuck would rein me in. That was his choice, and I had to respect his wishes, as much as I didn't want to at times."

widespread notoriety of her debut. "It's sad when your first job is so wonderful and the rest of the way down the line you have to struggle to find that again," she says. "I'd made one feature before *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*, but it was a low-budget thing that was never released. So I knew going in that the first *NIGHTMARE* would be my real debut. I was pretty nervous, but Wes put me at ease. He was an easy person to get along with, and I was completely convinced of his sincerity at all times. I can't really say that about the third film."

Craven had initially contacted her about reprising her role in *DREAM WARRIORS*, which he was writing at the time, but a disagreement with New Line

After getting married and becoming a mother, Langenkamp tired of limited roles and took a break from her career. "After ten years of acting, you start yearning for a part that expresses yourself more as you are and not something that harkens back to when you were in high school," she explains. "The 'chaste teen' or the 'coy girlfriend' are all contrived roles anyway, created by men who have probably never sat down with an 18-year-old girl. Most young women I know are really together and working hard to be taken seriously."

"I have to say it's been kind of a dry period," she admits. "When I went back looking for work, it was hard to get parts. It's hard for actresses to make the transition to adult [roles]."

Dylan (Hughes) finds himself lost in a dangerous dreamscape leading past the boiler room to the pits of Hell.





## NIGHTMARE NOTORIETY

**"It's sad when your first job is wonderful and the rest of the way down the line you struggle to find that again," says Langenkamp. "I have to say it's been a dry period."**

insanity, they are not quite sure what is real or not real. That's the concept we used in this film. We're not quite sure where Heather is losing it and where she is right on, and no one else is seeing the truth. The things that happen to this character are so frightening that we are really on the cutting edge of sanity for her."

Craven believes Langenkamp's latest portrayal of Heather/Nancy is important for several reasons, among them her willingness to deal openly with a particularly troubling incident in her own life. Shortly after the end of her television series, Langenkamp received numerous threatening letters from an obsessed fan. Although the letters have stopped, the episode was quite disturbing for Langenkamp and her family and is dealt with in the film. "The things we talked about were important for her to literally work out and [the role] does show her as an adult and young mother in a beautiful way," says Craven. "It was something of a gamble in that she hadn't worked a lot in several years and she just came through with aces all the way. She did a superb job."

"I was really nervous," Langenkamp admits. "I hadn't

done this in three years. 'Will I be able to do this? Am I going to be rusty? Will I be able to cry?' And yet it was easier than I have ever felt acting. Every scene was very available to me, and being a mother I identified so much with my screen-son Miko Hughes. I could feel all the feelings a mother would have toward a boy like him, and I think that our relationship is really great on screen. A lot of it has to do with having experience being a mom."

Langenkamp hopes the film will mark her graduation into more adult roles and shortly after filming wrapped, she starred in the NBC movie *THE NANCY AND TONYA STORY*, playing skater Nancy Kerrigan. Considering the two milestones Wes Craven and the *NIGHTMARE* films have played in her career, it was little wonder that the final day of shooting was filled with nostalgia. "The night we wrapped was extremely emotional. There was not a dry eye on the set. This was a kind of ten-year reunion with a lot of the same people. And to see people grow and change—some people had kids, some had gotten married—was really nice."

"I never cry at the end of films," says Craven, "but she had me crying. There was an immense amount of trust involved in this project, because from the first conversation we were asking her to deal not with something that I cooked up but something that was very much a part of her own life. On her last shot, she just thanked everybody so beautifully and spoke so warmly about how vulnerable she had been and yet how it was never violated, and how she had done something very important for herself." □

Additional quotes provided by Frederick C. Szebin.



Already stalked by an overzealous fan, Langenkamp's onscreen character is driven to the brink of paranoia by the appearance of Freddy Krueger.

You go through this really awkward four or five years when no one sees you as an adult, and you can't play a teenager."

The dry spell ended, oddly enough, with an invitation to lunch from Wes Craven, the man responsible for her initial success ten years earlier. For Langenkamp, the meeting would result in a role with the kind of mature range of emotions chaste teens and coy girlfriends can only dream of. In *NEW NIGHTMARE*, Langenkamp plays herself, a working mom dedicated to both her craft and her family. She is in almost every scene, running the gamut from glamorous starlet to bloodied and bruised super-mom, literally battling the forces of evil to save her child.

"It's such a great part. I can't tell you how nice it is to play adults," says Langenkamp. "I have a face that looks very young, so I'm often going up for parts that are much younger than I am. And as much as I enjoy trying, I know there is probably a girl out there who is really 22 who is going to be much more gen-

uine than me trying to be 22. There are so many more mature feelings that you have as you get older that it's hard to express them when you're playing an 18-year-old.

"More than anything I'm grateful that Wes wrote this character. There is nothing frivolous about her, and that is such a relief. She is on a very precarious edge of madness. Sometimes she isn't quite sure whether her own paranoia and fear for her life and her child is affecting her mental state. When people walk that edge of

In a scene that echoes the original film, Langenkamp again faces her old nemesis.







In another shot that will look familiar to fans of the original, Dylan (Hughes) watches helplessly while Krueger attacks babysitter Julie (Tracy Middendorf).

film's quake effects—swimming pools sloshing, car alarms going off, and plaster cracking—were terribly accurate. "We shot a lot of earthquake scenes, and no sooner had we gotten that cut together and looked at it than, boom, it hit. That was very spooky, and a lot of people freaked out about it," says the director, who in the best Roger Corman tradition took advantage of the situation. "We actually sent out a second unit to film the earthquake damage around Los Angeles, to show story points that had been written three weeks before."

In addition to earthquake sequences, WES CRAVEN'S **NEW NIGHTMARE** features a harrowing scene wherein Langenkamp chases her disoriented son across eight lanes of freeway traffic. The sequence required shutting down a one-mile stretch of freeway in Valencia for first-unit shooting, then having second unit shoot background plates for additional scenes filmed back in the studio. The task of compositing these background plates fell to visual effects director William Mesa. "Traditionally they wouldn't be attempting anything like this

freeway sequence in a **NIGHTMARE** film," he states. "It's a very realistic, action-oriented piece that is heart-stopping because of the little boy involved."

Because of the split-second coordination between foreground action and background plates, traditional blue screen compositry was ruled out. Instead, Mesa used a front projection system similar to the process he used at Introvision to create the remarkable train crash in **THE FUGITIVE**. "When you're doing floor matching and lighting matching and have smoke and sparks, you can't do that with blue-screen process compositry," explains Mesa. "We used the Vistavision front projection system, and the way it works is you take a pin-point light source coming out of the projector, projecting through 50-50 mirror onto the screen. The 3M screen has millions of little tiny beads that are actually optical lenses. Light comes out to that screen and the lenses send all the light back directly to its source, in this case the 50-50 mirror." The film camera, lined up behind the mirror in the exact same nodal position

## NIGHTMARE VS. REALITY

**"The film is about Heather Langenkamp in Hollywood," says Englund. "Then odd things occur, and it's hard to decipher whether it's a stalker or maybe you-know-who in reality."**

as the projector, receives the clear, sharp image reflected back from the screen.

In this way, actors can perform in front of the screen and be instantly composited into the background; lighting, props, and flooring can be coordinated with the composited scenery; and practical effects cues such as smoke or sparks can be perfectly timed with the background action. Best of all, if one take doesn't work, the plate can be quickly rewound for another.

"It's a fairly involved process," adds Mesa. "To do the [front projection], we have to shoot larger format Vistavision plates; plus we have to shoot finer grain films stocks, which means you need more lighting on location. So it is a lot more involved, but the results are very believable, and you feel like the actors are really in those environments and those situations."

**T**he final stage of **NEW NIGHTMARE** involves Langenkamp's entering the dreams of her son and journeying to the depths of Hell to confront the ultimate Freddy. The set-

ting is an elaborate multi-roomed set courtesy of production designer Cynthia Charette who, from the beginning, encouraged Craven to go beyond Freddy's traditional boiler room. "I thought, 'Let's do more than finding a building and going down to the basement boiler room,' so I researched the history of Hell. This is my ode to Dante's *Inferno* and Virgil's depiction of Hell."

To reach Freddy's inner sanctum, Langenkamp slides down a ramp, through a 20 foot-tall carving of a gape-mouthed Freddy, plummets into a Greco-Roman pool, then ventures through several chambers. "First is Purgatory," Charette elaborates. "Next is Styx, a filthy marsh which takes you down to the lower pit, Cocytus, which is the lowest depth of Hell and Freddy's ultimate furnace. That is where we do the final scene with Freddy where he gets the door shut on him and burns up into eternity."

So is this, really, finally, the end of Freddy Krueger? Or is this the beginning of a new franchise for New Line Cinema? "I don't think so, and frankly I don't think New Line does either," claims Craven. "I

Courtesy of a bigger budget, Krueger stalks a new and improved boiler room.





have a feeling that they want to be moving on to different sorts of films. In fact, Bob Shaye, in a scene that we filmed in his office, says this is the one where we want to lay Freddy in his grave forever. Now I don't believe that you can ever lay Freddy in his grave forever, but I wouldn't be surprised if this was the last NIGHTMARE."

Langenkamp is even more certain about the prospect of appearing in further films. "Absolutely not," she states emphatically. "This is such a triumphant ending for my character and for Nancy that there would be nowhere to go. It would not be worth it. Frankly I don't think Wes would do another one, and I wouldn't want to work with anyone else on this series. I wouldn't want to be a part of a NIGHTMARE movie if I was just going to be a character who was killed like I was in the third. There was something very unsatisfying about being just another victim of Freddy's after the first where Nancy was more of a hero."

Freddy Krueger may live on, however, by facing off with the machete-wielding Jason Vorhees, a la FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF-MAN. New Line, which distributed JASON GOES TO HELL: THE FINAL FRIDAY after Paramount abandoned the moribund FRIDAY THE 13TH series, now controls both characters and is in preliminary development of such a team-up film. In fact, the comic coda of the so-called FINAL FRIDAY showed Krueger, or at least his unmistakable glove, retrieving the defeated Jason's hockey mask.

WES CRAVEN'S NEW NIGHTMARE "doesn't really leave an opening for any more" sequels, according to De Luca. "If we did FREDDY VS. JASON it would be handled like ALIEN VS. PREDATOR, as a stand-alone story that doesn't continue any plot lines from either film series. We're currently soliciting ideas for development, and I've talked to Wes about it, but he has other things on his plate right now. Of course, the first person I solicited for any interest or ideas was Wes." □



Freddy retains his signature hat and sweater, but the color tones have been changed and an overcoat added. These two small sartorial touches are part of redesigning the character so that he looks both familiar and new at the same time.





# THE 50 MOST POWERFUL PEOPLE IN SCIENCE FICTION

**IMAGI-MOVIES** presents a look at  
who can make or break the genre.

*"Using order to deal with  
the disorderly, using calm to  
deal with the clamorous, is  
mastering the heart."*

—Sun Tzu.

**By Mark A. Altman**

What is power? Philosopher Thomas Hobbes defines it as a condition that exists when man delegates his sovereign rights to an absolute ruler in a world where he is at liberty but his actions determined. To Machiavelli, the powerful will ideally be both feared and loved; since it is difficult to be both, he will prefer to be feared, because the efficacy of fear is unfailing. He will employ force ruthlessly, committing his cruelties all at once in order to be done with them, while stretching out the granting of benefits in order that they may be more enjoyed. The prince will utilize propaganda in keeping people satisfied.

In other words, welcome to Hollywood.



The phenomenal success of JURASSIC PARK gave Stephen Spielberg the clout to make anything he wants, placing him at the top of our Power 50 list.

The fact of the matter is that it takes a person with major clout to get a science-fiction project greenlighted in Hollywood, where the genre is considered risky business, due to its high cost and a state of the art that is constantly becoming outdated. A year ago, I presented a list of "Science Fiction's 50 Most Powerful People" for the late and unlamented *Sci-Fi Channel Magazine*. Now, a year later, *Imagi-Movies* continues the tradition of taking a look at who has not only the power but also the inclination to create, shape, and make science-fiction, fantasy, and horror projects. (There are individuals with far more influence in Tinseltown who would not be caught dead toiling in this "ghetto" genre.)

These are the people who have a track record and a continuing interest in contributing to imaginative science-fiction. These are Science Fiction's Power 50.



# 1 STEVEN SPIELBERG ↑

SEA QUEST may be a sinking ship, but JURASSIC PARK gave Spielberg the clout to make just about anything he wants, and NBC even climbed aboard Amblin's EARTH II, another attempt to make it on the small screen. After the embarrassment of SEA QUEST, EARTH II may just stand to succeed where previous Spielberg TV efforts failed. Meanwhile, Spielberg continues to dominate the children's market with animated fare like TINY TOONS and the upcoming CASPER, THE FRIENDLY GHOST feature. We've come a long way since POLTERGEIST. (Last year's ranking: 7)

# 2 JAMES CAMERON ↓

Cameron's in flux. Despite a much heralded deal which was supposed to give the action auteur complete autonomy, he ended up back at Fox's door when he could not get a completion bond on TRUE LIES. Fox backed the film, but is now in the hole for overages which are mounting. If the film does T2 box-office, all is forgiven and on to SPIDERMAN. If not, Cameron may find himself entering into another abyss, the same one that engulfed Michael Cimino. (Last year's ranking: 1)

# 3 TIM BURTON ↑

THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS was no nightmare for Disney, giving them one of their few hits in '93, while Warner Bros. got its own wish that made everyone happy: Tim Burton signed back at the studio and off the BATMAN franchise. Although he is back as executive producer, quietly studio execs will tell you how happy they are to be able to lighten up the Dark Knight. As long as his eclectic films continue to attract an audience, expect

Though Batman purists still blith and moan, director Tim Burton continues to charm genre audiences with his eccentric and fanciful brand of filmmaking.



The success of TERMINATOR 2 propelled James Cameron to the number 2 slot. Now, boxoffice results of the over-budget TRUE LIES will determine whether he still has the power to make his proposed big-screen SPIDERMAN.

Burton to continue to be able to write his own ticket in Tinseltown. (Last year's ranking: 11)

# 4 RICK BERMAN ↓

Since the Viacom merger, don't be surprised to see Paramount execs take a more hands-on approach to their crown jewel, the STAR TREK franchise. Despite this, and regardless of promises to the contrary, most of the TREK feature team is from his television crew, which gives Berman unprecedented control over the film, although this powerful great bird of the galaxy could not prevent the studio from trimming the budget. Berman will have the last laugh, however, when the film does boffo boxoffice and VOYAGER continues to boldly go where no syndicated Nielson ratings have gone before. (Last year's ranking: 2)

# 5 RICHARD DONNER ↑

Not only one of the most successful commercial filmmakers of all-time, but also now proprietor of the House of Hammer, from which library he plans a bevy of remakes. Though THE WITCHING HOUR may never get made with Donner at the helm, his immersion, along with wife Laura Shuler-Donner (LADYHAWKE), make this a duo on the rise. (Last Year's ranking: 15)

# 6 GEORGE LUCAS ↑

For a while, it looked like George Lucas was turning into Orson Welles, a brilliant wunderkind who had lost his magic touch. Now, after diversions like THE YOUNG INDIANA JONES CHRONICLES, Lucas is finally gearing up to do another INDY film and the long-awaited second STAR WARS trilogy. Meanwhile, he continues to become a leader in software development and other roadstops of the information super highway, proving that he is truly the visionary we had him pegged to be, a long, long time ago, before he made HOWARD THE DUCK and WILLOW. (Last year's ranking: 12)

# 7 MARIO KASAAR ↑

Despite financial problems at Carolco, Kasaar continues to follow his gut instincts by bankrolling films like STARGATE, a risky \$50-million gamble on an event pic with stars Kurt Russell and James Spader, whose marquee value is unproven. Can a film wherein

Jaye Davison doesn't show his schlong do big business? Kasaar is counting on it. (Last year's ranking: 18)

# 8 EDWARD R. PRESSMAN ↑

After a series of art-house bombs, Pressman is returning to his roots with a series of science fiction spectacles. Films like THE CROW, JUDGE DREDD, THE IMMORTALS, and another remake of ISLAND OF LOST SOULS, along with strong relationships with genre auteurs like Oliver Stone (WILD PALMS), Richard Stanley (HARDWARE), and Brett Leonard (THE LAWNMOWER MAN) make Pressman a man who is taking the genre seriously. (Last year's ranking: 10)

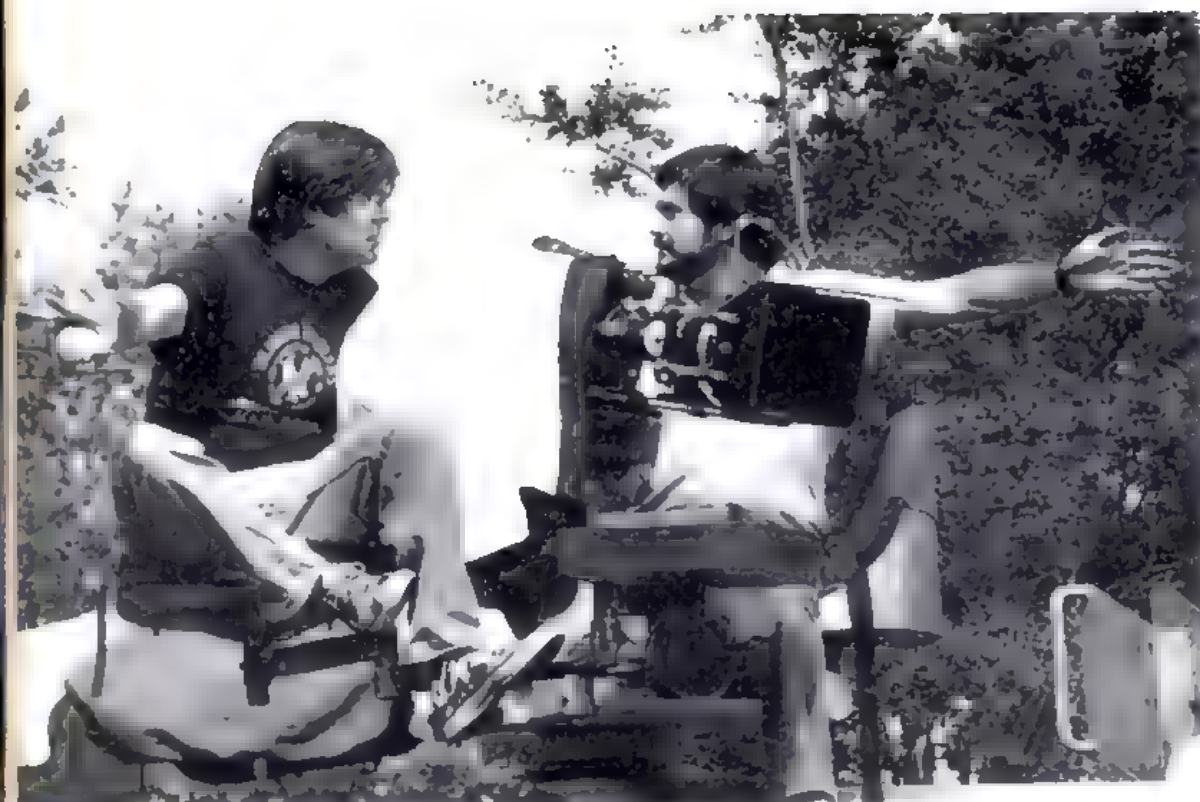
# 9 MICHAEL DELUCA ↑

The genre-friendly New Line

#4: ST:TNG executive Rick Berman now controls the movie franchise.







#12: Stephen King's name is no box office guarantee, but loyal audiences continue to watch mini-series based on his books, like **THE STAND**.

executive, a fan who has not only championed the myriad genre product at the mini-major but is also sequeing into scripting himself with the John Carpenter scarefest, **IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS**. A young executive who grew up with **STAR WARS** and now has the clout to make the films other fans can only dream about making.  
(Last year's ranking: Not Listed)

## 10 ROLAND EMMERICH ↑

After his ambitious German entry, **MOON 44**, a low-budget, hi-tech film, he saved **UNIVERSAL SOLDIER** for Carolco, after the departure of Andrew Davis. Despite less than blockbuster numbers for the film, Emmerich got to make his dream project, **STARGATE**. Its box-office fate will determine if Emmerich becomes the next Spielberg or Sidney J. Furie.  
(Last year's ranking: 17)

## 11 CHRIS COLUMBUS ↑

#16: Francis Coppola's success directing **DRACULA** led him to exec produce **FRANKENSTEIN**.



Reportedly attached to every hot sci-fi project in Hollywood, the **HOME ALONE** helmer turns his attention to the remake of Vincent Price's **THEATRE OF BLOOD** for MGM, followed by what may be an even bigger film, a big-budget version of the comic book **DAREDEVIL** for Fox.  
(Last year's ranking: Not Listed)

## 12 STEPHEN KING ↓

A series of less than successful outings at the box-office (**SLEEPWALKERS**, **NEEDFUL THINGS**) has been somewhat redeemed by the performance of **THE STAND** on television, but ironically the most successful King films are the ones he disowns, like **THE LAWNMOWER MAN**. King's control-fetish may preclude any big deals for the author from Maine in the near future, although Castle Rock may come to the rescue again if **DELORES CLAIRBORNE** is the success of their previous partnerships with the horror scribe.  
(Last year's ranking: 3)

## 13 OLIVER STONE ↑

Stone-produced **WILD PALMS** may have been a bust, but Stone has expressed interest in the works of William Gibson and is now attached to produce the Terry Hayes-written reinvention of the **PLANET OF THE APES** mythos.  
(Last year's ranking: Not Listed)

## 14 CHARLES BAND ↓

The so-called new Roger Corman. Now imagine how successful he'd be if his pictures were any good? Band needs to loosen up on the control over his Full Moon operation and infuse some new creative blood. He may think his **PUPPET MASTER**

series is a franchise, but he's got a long way to go before he can make a successful break into the theatrical market.

(Last year's ranking: 2)

## 15 WILLIAM SHATNER ↑

This writer, director, captain and cultural icon may have had to jump through hoops for Universal (outings on **SEA QUEST** and **COLUMBO**) to get them to commit to a **TEK-WAR** series, but clearly Shatner has gained some major clout through the success of the telefilms. In addition, his pooh-poohing of the **STAR TREK: NEXT GENERATION** series made him a movie star and helped the **GENERATIONS** film to become an event film rather than a television episode on the big screen.

(Last year's ranking: 23)

## 16 FRANCIS COPPOLA

Coppola's most successful picture in years was a genre outing, and he hasn't forgotten that. Next up is his production of **FRANKENSTEIN**, followed by the reported **VAN HELSING CHRONICLES**, to be directed by son Roman. **DRACULA** helped make the artsy auteur a wanted man in Hollywood again.  
(Last year's ranking: 16)

## 17 PEN DENSAM, RICHARD LEWIS, JOHN WATSON ↑

Although their **SPACE RANGERS** was a bust, the production trio continues to succeed on the big screen and their next big film, MGM's **BLOWN AWAY**, could be a needed hit for the studio. Meanwhile, plans are afoot for the troika to bring an **OUTER LIMITS** revival to cable television.  
(Last year's ranking: 39)

#27: Tom Holland is still coasting on the reputation of **CHILD'S PLAY**. Up next: **DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS**.



#15: William Shatner's **TEK-WAR** series gave him clout beyond his values as a **STAR TREK** captain.

## 18 GALE ANNE HURD ↑

Hurd's affinity for the genre is rare in Hollywood, and among her slate of upcoming projects are **DARK CITY** and **WITCHHUNT** for HBO. She continues to push for young talent and science-fiction projects other filmmakers wouldn't touch.  
(Last year's ranking: 29)

## 19 GREG MADAY ↑

Spearheading **PTEN** for Warner Bros, Maday shepherded **TIME TRAX** to the screen along with **BABYLON 5**. His next success story could be **ISLAND CITY**. The big question mark is with the emergence of a Warner Bros fifth network, what will be the fate of **PTEN**?  
(Last year's ranking: 20)

## 20 DOUGLAS TRUMBULL ↑

Years of dedication to improving the art of theatrical exhibition may be finally paying off for Trumbull in a big way with the emergence of immersive motion picture experiences. Anyone who's experienced his flights of wonder in Universal's **BACK TO THE FUTURE** ride or at the Luxor in Las Vegas will recognize that, and Trumbull's suddenly becoming hot as virtual experiences become the rage.  
(Last year's ranking: Not Listed)

## 21 MIKE RICHARDSON ↑

The publisher and founder of Dark Horse has been one of the few success stories in comic to film adaptations. Although **DR.**





#33: Separated from the STAR TREK motion pictures, Leonard Nimoy suffers a loss in clout.

GIGGLES was a bust and ALIENS VS. PREDATOR never made it before the cameras, THE MASK, and TIME COP promise big box-office and Richardson's housekeeping deal with 20th Century-Fox make him a powerful force in multi-media synergy. (Last year's ranking: 41)

## 22 BRETT LEONARD ↑

THE LAWNMOWER MAN made Leonard one of the hottest directors in Hollywood, and he's taken his time picking his next project. His Achilles Heel may be the excessive creative control he wants after one picture, but Leonard's ambitious plans may prove him to be the next important sci-fi power player in this brave new world of computer-enhanced filmmaking. (Last year's ranking: 30)

## 23 KENNETH JOHNSON ↑

With ALIEN NATION back

#24: Though Roger Corman had produced less science fiction recently, the success of CARNOSAUR may have marked a return to the genre.

from the dead thanks to the success of sci-fi on the Fox network, Kenneth Johnson has another shot at building the aborted show into a successful franchise and make up for SHORT CIRCUIT II. (Last year's ranking: 32)

## 24 ROGER CORMAN ↑↑

Corman's desire to keep tight tabs on budgets have led him to making more martial arts and erotic thrillers than sci-fiers, but with the emerging CGI technology making sfx available on a shoestring, Corman may once again embrace the genre, particularly with the litany of titles ready to be sequelized, including the oft-mentioned BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS. (Last year's ranking: 26)

## 25 J. MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI, DOUG NETTER

BABYLON 5 may not be everyone's cup of tea, but the producers have proven they can produce science fiction with big production values on a shoestring budget. That's no small feat. With a likely renewal for a second season and a bevy of new licensing deals, BABYLON 5 may still become an important science fiction franchise, giving the two executive producer's expanded clout. (Last year's ranking: 25)

## 26 STEVEN DE SOUZA ↓

Everyone's favorite script doctor, who's worked on a myriad of genre features, now turns to directing with STREET FIGHTER. Despite turning down the next Bond film, no writer has consistently worked more and shown a better knack for writing sci-fi actioners than deSouza, an amiable, talented and powerful member of the Sci-Fi 50. (Last year's ranking: 24)



#30: He might rank higher if he worked in the genre more often, but Scott still has the power to get a science fiction film made, the next time he wants.

## 27 TOM HOLLAND ↑

Although his last film, THE TEMP, was an embarrassment for Paramount, Holland is working on salvaging his reputation with a remake of DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS. Nor has Hollywood forgotten his success with FRIGHT NIGHT, which mixed horror and humor on a reasonable budget to make for a summer surprise for Universal. (Last year's ranking: Not Listed)

## 28 CHRIS CARTER ↑

Carter is Fox's Superman. Despite mediocre ratings, the web has shown unprecedented faith in THE X-FILES, which is attracting key demos, and is calling on him to develop other genre shows. Although the series is expensive by Fox standards, they're getting tremendous bang for minimal bucks and the show is developing a major cult following. (Last year's ranking: Not Listed)

## 29 JEAN MACCUDY ↑

MacCurdy—the head of Warner Bros Animation, which is responsible for the immensely successful TINY TOONS and BATMAN—promises to be even more vital as Warner Bros launches their new network calling for the development of a slew of new animated fare. (Last year's ranking: 33)

## 30 RIDLEY SCOTT ↑

Scott is now developing films under his RSA (Ridley Scott Associates) banner, formerly devoted exclusively to producing commercials. Along with connections to ALIEN III helmer David Fincher and DEMOLITION MAN's Marco Brambilla, who's

shooting SAMSONITE WARHEAD for the company, Scott continues to be at the forefront of pushing the envelope of the genre with such films as BLADE RUNNER and ALIEN. (Last year's ranking: 37)

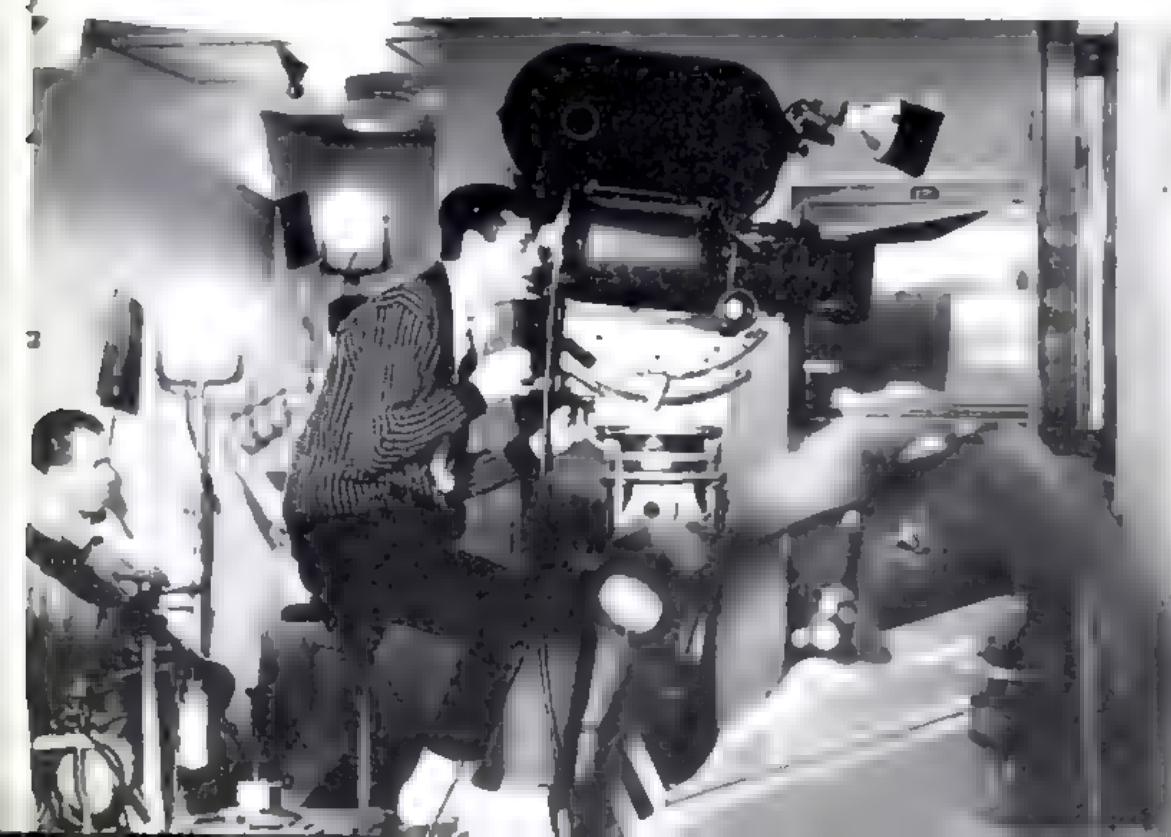
## 31 SAM RAIMI ↑

Branching out from features to television, Raimi has been the creative force behind Fox's MANTIS and Universal Action Pack's HERCULES. And although he sidestepped the genre with his latest effort, THE QUICK AND THE DEAD, a western, Raimi's passion for the *cinéfantastique* along with his newfound bankability makes him a director worth watching. (Last year's ranking: 40)

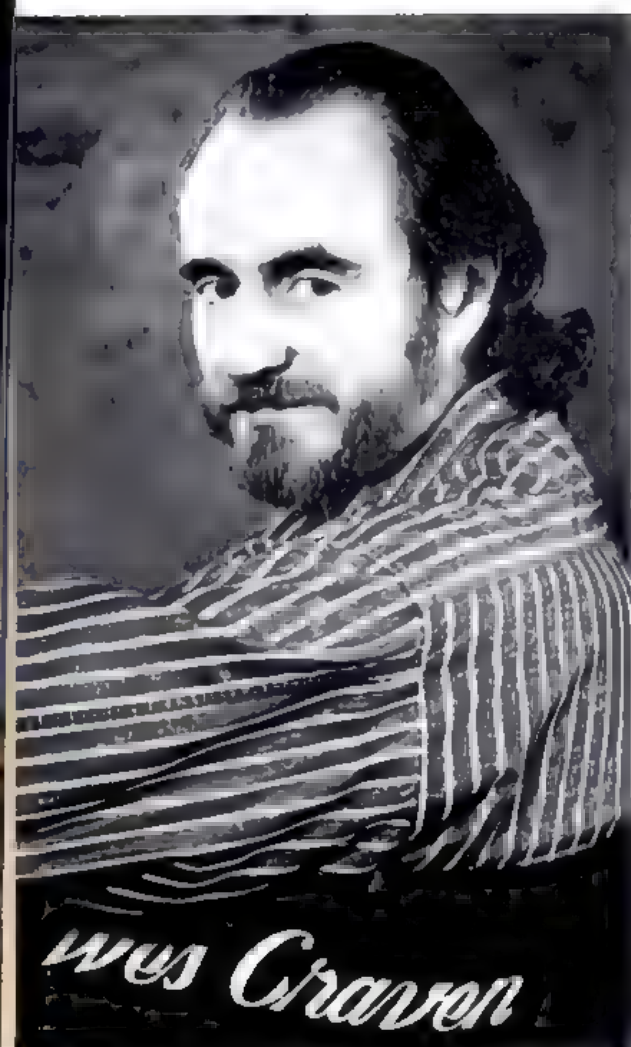
## 32 DAVID KOEPP ↑

Koepp's work on JURASSIC PARK and THE SHADOW make him an important genre scribe, and with aspirations ranging from

Gale Anne Hurd is #18 this year, but to maintain that ranking, she'll have to do better than NO ESCAPE.







**#47: Wes Craven** is poised to take a leap upward, depending on the results of his **NEW NIGHTMARE**.

directing to working on the sequel to **JURASSIC PARK**, he may be a new face on the sci-fi scene who is definitely worth watching.  
(Last year's ranking: 42)

## **33 LEONARD NIMOY** ↓

Not only was Nimoy not offered the **STAR TREK** feature, but his plaintive cries when the studio wouldn't meet his salary demands weren't enough to stop the film from getting made. With Paramount banking on Shatner to carry a "Two Captains" film, Nimoy became the odd-man out, leaving Berman in firm control of the franchise he reportedly always wanted to captain.  
(Last year's ranking: 28)

## **34 MICHAEL PILLER** ↓

By choosing to continue to work on the **STAR TREK** series with **VOYAGER**, rather than go off and develop his own series, Piller precluded the possibility of developing anything autonomously at the moment and linked his fortunes with Berman and the continuing **STAR TREK** franchise.  
(Last year's ranking: 14)

## **35 GLEN LARSON** ↑

Once the wunderkind of television, Larson's name has been conspicuously absent from screens for the last decade, although recent rumblings regarding a revival of **GALACTICA** on Fox and the

possibility of another new genre series from the **MAGNUM P.I.** and **KNIGHTRIDER** veteran could mean the fortunes of this Aaron Spelling of sci-fi may be on the rise.  
(Last year's ranking: Not Listed)

## **36 TRACY TORME** ↑

A former **TREK** creative consultant and screenwriter of **FIRE AND THE SKY**, Torme's currently one of the genre's hottest young talents with a superb sci-fi western in development with HBO, **STORM-RIDERS**, and a major sci-fi pilot, **SLIDERS**, at Fox. Most promising of all is a futuristic noir series for Home Box Office, **DARK CITY**, with producer Gale Anne Hurd.  
(Last year's ranking: 46)

## **37 BRYCE ZABEL** ↑

This veteran of **LOIS & CLARKE** has consistently written the series' best episodes, and with a love for the genre, this former CNN reporter is assuredly another important television writer on the rise. It seems only a matter of time before he rises from hired hand to show runner.  
(Last year's ranking: Not Listed)

## **38 DAN FILIE** ↑

The man behind the Action Pack. Filled with genre friendly premises like **TEK-WAR** and **KNIGHTRIDER 2010**, Filie has championed action-packed, genre vehicles, many of which will be spun off into series. Only question is will there be more quality fare like **TEK WAR** or more insipid efforts like **FAST LANE**.  
(Last year's ranking: Not Listed)

## **39 JERI TAYLOR** ↑

**#45: After recovering from health problems, expect to see Harlan Ellison take a more active hand in shaping the fortunes of **BABYLON FIVE** next year.**



**#32: Writer David Koepp** (second from left) earned his spot with **JURASSIC PARK**. The disappointing **THE SHADOW** could change that next year.

She may have been a **STAR TREK** virgin a few years ago, but now she has joined the few important **TREK** overlords crafting the latest series. If **VOYAGER** becomes a success (and how could it not?), expect this former **QUINCY** and **JAKE AND THE FATMAN** veteran's Hollywood stock to soar. She's a rare combination of talent and class.  
(Last year's ranking: Not Listed)

## **40 GARY NARDINO HARVE BENNETT** ↓

**TIME TRAX** may not be a smash, but it's held its own in a cluttered first-run syndicated marketplace, and with strong credentials in the genre field for both producers, it's likely we'll be hearing from both sooner than later.  
(Last year's ranking: 22)

## **41 RON MOORE BRANNON BRAGA** ↑

After scripting the **STAR**

**TREK** feature film, both writers may be able to elude the **TREK** curse with their tremendous talent and originality. In the past, most **STAR TREK** talent couldn't get arrested on other projects, but expect to be hearing more from both of these guys if they choose not to make the **VOYAGER** journey.  
(Last year's ranking: Not Listed)

## **42 BARRY SHULMAN** ↓

With the Sci-Fi Channel floundering due to cable re-regulations that prevent the station from gaining further market penetration, the net's original programming has suffered; and, let's face it, there are only so many times you can watch that same episode of **LOST IN SPACE**, right? Until the net is able to expand, they won't be able to increase the groundbreaking programming they need to succeed in a marketplace dominated by hypercritical fans.  
(Last year's ranking: 8)

## **43 SCOTT ROSENBERG** ↑

The major domo of Malibu Comics who has aggressively expanded into the multi-media arena along with CD-ROM, video games, and the novel approach of pairing their comics with original films on videotape featuring the characters of **FIREARM** and **HARDCASE**. Their sci-fi heavy **ULTRAVERSE** offers a bevy of opportunities for features, and with representation from the high-powered William Morris agency, Malibu's expansion should continue briskly.  
(Last year's ranking: Not Listed)

## **44 STUART GORDON**



The overseas success of **FORTRESS** have restored the bankability of Gordon, whose reputation was tarnished by his association with the failure of films like **ROBOJOX**. Now Gordon's innovative approach to visceral horror may help him attain the status of his peers like Cronenberg who seem to have deserted the genre for greener and more respectable pastures.

(Last year's ranking: 44)

## 45 HARLAN ELLISON ↑↑

As conceptual consultant on **BABYLON 5**, author Ellison has been atypically quiet, but after he makes a full recovery from heart troubles, expect to see him take a more active hand in this and other sci-fi projects. His inimitable personality and the reverence he has among younger sci-fi talent continue to make him a force of nature to be reckoned with.

(Last year's ranking: 48)

## 46 WILLIAM GIBSON ↑↑

The god of cyberpunk is finally making it to the big screen with **NEUROMANCER**, although the casting of Keanu Reeves may make Gibson's jaunt as a screenwriter a short-lived stay. Other Gibson adaptations in the works include a project from the always-reliable Abel "fucking" Ferrara for Ed Pressman. With breakthroughs in CGI technology, it may be possible to explore the wild worlds of William Gibson which were previously only the province of the printed page.

(Last year's ranking: Not Listed)

## 47 WES CRAVEN ↑↑

His kiss-and-make-up act with New Line has helped make Craven a player again after a series of unrewarding attempts at recapturing past glories. If he can

#31: Sam Raimi parlayed successful low-budget excess to launch two genre TV pilots and to direct a studio Western. Just hope he doesn't forget his roots.



#44: Stuart Gordon couldn't sell Christopher Lambert to American audiences, but **FORTRESS** still turned a profit overseas, proving that the **REANIMATOR** director is bankable even when working with a multi-million budget.

revive the Freddy franchise successfully for the company and then actually make a good horror comedy with Eddie Murphy for Paramount, expect to see his stock rise considerably, returning this former big-leaguer to the major leagues.

(Last year's ranking: Not Listed)

## 48 JOHN CARPENTER ↑↑

After missteps like **BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA** and big-budget bombs like **MEMOIRS OF AN INVISIBLE MAN**, it looked as if John Carpenter would be relegated to

the Tobe Hooper scrapheap. But, like a phoenix rising from the ashes, Carpenter returns to top form with the upcoming Lovecraftesque **IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS**, and soon he will begin shooting the remake of **VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED** for Universal. With New Line topper Michael DeLuca as a high-powered backer and with **ESCAPE FROM LOS ANGELES** in development, the director of **HALLOWEEN** promises to be a major player on the horror scene once again.

(Last year's ranking: Not Listed)

## 49 FRED CLARKE

Clarke started *Cinefantastique* as a fanzine and alienated everyone in the business from George Lucas to Steven Spielberg. *CFQ* has shaped opinion about upcoming genre releases and may have singlehandedly been responsible for killing fan interest in duds like **ALIEN 3**. Unlike other genre magazines, *CFQ* is regularly read by members of the industry—writers, directors, and crew—which gives it a clout that mainstream circulation champ *Starlog* and its ilk lack.

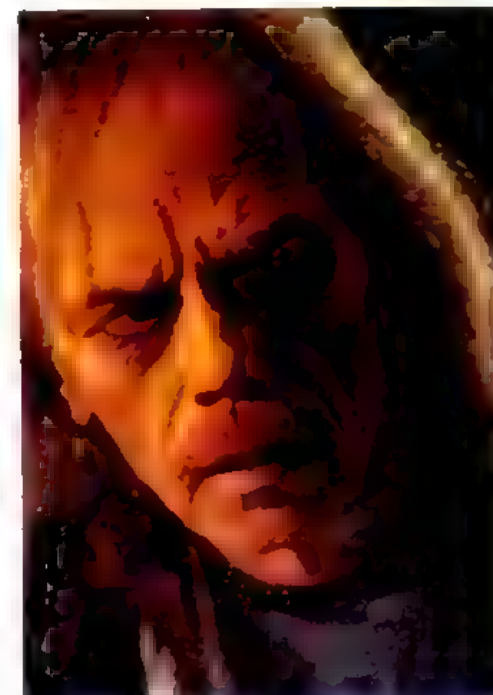
(Last year's ranking: 49)

## 50 ADAM MALIN, GARY BERMAN

Starting as teenagers putting on baseball card shows in New York, Malin & Berman have turned the running of sci-fi conventions into a successful business. In addition to producing shows all over the world, they've branched out into licensing merchandise and producing their own genre fare for film and television. While the convention business should remain their first priority, expect to see a wide range of multi-media product from the company, focusing on sci-fi personalities and shows and expanding into original dramatic fare on television, motion pictures, and video.

(Last year's ranking: 50)

#48: After **BODY BAGS**, upcoming projects could once again make John Carpenter a major player.





# The Disney VILLAINS

**Those Classic Cartoon  
Characters You Love to Hate.**

*By Dan Scapperotti*

Good drama has always depended on a bad villain, especially in the movies. The antagonist can be anyone or anything, depending on the skill of the screenwriter; in some cases, even the "good guy" can actually be the "bad guy." While Disney's scant competition over the years lies forgotten in the dust bins of cinematic history, the studio's animators and storymen have become the modern equivalent of the Brothers Grimm to generations of filmgoers—in no small part because of their ability to provide memorably frightening antagonists. For, while title characters get name recognition and star billing, it is often the "unsung villains" (as Disney refers to its stable of animated bad guys) who are recalled years later. (On the other hand, when a voiceover in Don Bluth's *ROCK-A-DOODLE* terms a villain "more annoying than frightening," truer words were never spoken.)

Disney's villains come in two types: darkly evil ones and comic buffoons. Several of the former have the powers of darkness on their side. The most memorable of all Disney villains is still the wicked queen in *SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS*, animated by Norm Ferguson. Totally de-

With *SNOW WHITE*'s Evil Queen, the Disney feature film villains got off to a wonderfully wicked start

void of humor from her hideous transformation to her diabolical poison plot, she is one of the screen's most frightening images—so despicable is this creature that she hires a lackey to cut out the heart of the innocent Princess.

A close relative, also rising from the well spring of fairy tails, is Maleficent, Sleeping Beauty's vitriolic nemesis in Disney's 1961 feature. Marc Davis did extensive animation work on both Maleficent and







Above: SLEEPING BEAUTY's Maleficent. Below: comic villains in SONG OF THE SOUTH (right) and in THE POINTER (left).

Cruella De Vil. Enraged by a perceived slight from good King Stefan on the birth of his daughter, the sorceress plants a spell that sends everyone in the kingdom into a deep, deathlike sleep. Her powers even surpass those of the Wicked Queen: she has an army of troll-like creatures at her disposal, as well as the ability to transform herself into a towering dragon.

A poor, distant relation is the mad Madam Mim, seen in







Left: ICHABOD AND MR TOAD's attorney was particularly "intimidating." Right: ROBIN HOOD's Prince John and Sir Hiss benefited from Peter Ustinov's and Terry Thomas' voices.

**THE SWORD AND THE STONE.** She is the most whimsical of the three witches who have appeared in Disney features. Her diabolical duel with Merlin is a patch quilt of sight gags and blunders as Mim transforms from one creature into another in a vain attempt to outwit the magician. Finally, snatching a page from H. G. Wells, Merlin uses a microbe to dispatch her.

Cruella De Vil, though devoid of supernatural powers, proves herself a soul sister to her fairy tale counterparts. The stylized animation in 101 DALMATIONS bestows upon Cruella's features a jagged coun-

tenance that compliments her name. This twisted, would-be aristocrat is such a fiendish embodiment of everything evil about the fur trade that her role as a deterrent may be applauded by animal rights activists today even more than when the film was released in 1961...although dalmatian pelts may be pushing the credibility envelope a bit.

One of the Studio's most insidious villains is never seen, his presence only felt. This antagonist is cunning, deadly, and careless. His mistakes have devastating consequences for the community he invades. His victims are often

alerted to his presence only by a loud, deadly crack. The beautiful, pastoral tranquility of the cycle of life in the deep wood is shattered in BAMBI by Man. First the young deer's mother is killed off-screen, and then the forest is set ablaze, by ruthless hunters.

The loss of a parent is often the catalyst for the drama about to unfold. Like the proverbial Sword of Damocles, studio writers always had the threat of death hanging over their heroes but seldom brought a killing to the screen. Most of the time, it occurs prior to the opening of the story and is not related to foul play. How-

ever, Bambi's mother is deliberately killed by a hunter, and in Disney's latest, THE LION KING, the royal Mufasa is murdered by his evil brother, Scar.

**T**he oldest Disney villain is, of course, Pete, the swaggering peg-legged bully who originated in the early Alice cartoons. He is also the longest running Disney character, having moved into the Mickey Mouse cartoons with STEAMBOAT WILLIE and continued to harass Mickey and Minnie through a batch of early black-and-white shorts, reacquiring a leg along the way.

After a dry spell, the Disney villains regained their former glory with GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE's Ratigan (left) and LITTLE MERMAID's Ursula (right).





# Disney VILLAINS

## THE MEN BEHIND THE MENACE

*Two Grandmasters of Evil Animation,  
Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston.*

*By Dan Scapperotti*

The two grand masters of animation, Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, who worked on virtually every animated Disney feature from SNOW WHITE through THE FOX AND THE HOUND, are back. Despite an avowed aversion for publishers, the Laurel and Hardy of animation have, largely at the request of the present crop of Disney artists, put together another insightful tome, *The Disney Villains* (Hyperion), which they vow will be their last.

The two men have animated many of the bad guys who made the Disney animated films classics of the medium. Ollie Johnston explains what makes a memorable villain: he or she "must be interested in getting rid of somebody, hurting somebody, killing them or getting something from them. Some have magic to do that; others don't need magic. Magic, however, helps make it more interesting at times."

"You have to know what they're trying to do and who they're trying to do it to," he adds. "We found the victim is just as important as the villain because, without the victim, the villain has nothing to do. For instance, Medusa wanted the big diamond and was willing to put the little girl down the hole to get it. Many people think that all the Disney villains are women, but there are only eight of them. All the rest are men. Women villains just seem to appeal to the public more."



Two survivors of Disney's "Nine Old Men," Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, have written a book on *The Disney Villains*.

Frank Thomas worked on Captain Hook, Cinderella's stepmother, Madam Mim in SWORD AND THE STONE, and the Queen of Hearts in ALICE IN WONDERLAND among others, while Ollie Johnston had his own share of villains. "The first villains I worked on were Brer Fox and Brer Bear in SONG OF THE SOUTH," says Johnston. "They were so easily tricked by Brer Rabbit before they ever got to eat him that I began to think of them in a reverse way. I felt the victims were actually Brer Fox and Brer Bear, who never got anything out of their villainy. The Fox's conceit was that he always wanted to show how smart he was. He could have caught the Rabbit and eaten him, but he had to do all kinds of things and show off. In the meantime, a little rabbit was

too smart for him and always found a way out of it."

Johnston also worked on the prosecuting attorney in ICHABOD AND MR. TOAD, when Toad finds himself at the bar of justice, the victim of a plot to steal his ancestral home, Toad hall. "The district attorney is a mean villain," says the animator, "because he is so intimidating. He was fun to work on because he was like a British attorney who would browbeat his witness."

The animator has a special fondness for the character of Mr. Smee, the bumbling pirate in PETER PAN because the storymen were thinking of

Johnston when they drew the character. Johnston also acknowledges the contributions of voice characterization to the films. "One of the best villains I had to do was Prince John and his sidekick, Sir Hiss, in ROBIN HOOD, because I had such wonderful voices to work with from Peter Ustinov and Terry Thomas. The way the two characters worked together was really exciting."

The two men were also involved in sequences which featured other villains. "When Marc Davis was doing Cruella and Maleficent, we were working in scenes with him doing other characters," says Thomas. "For instance, I did the stepmother when he was doing Cinderella so we co-animated on that scene. We had an influence on him, and he had an influence on us. You

This gruff, bloated character, whose unwashed countenance is enhanced by a four-day growth of beard, was the studio's Simon Legree. He was the outlaw who threatened Sheriff Mickey in TWO GUN MICKEY and reprised the role against Chip 'N Dale in THE LONE CHIPMUNK. Pete was ready to evict the Mouse and his two pals, Donald and Goofy, from their home in MOVING DAY before the trio's shenanigans blew the place sky high. When Mickey's screen popularity was eclipsed by Donald Duck, Pete was there, throwing his weight around in THE NEW NEIGHBOR and TIMBER. He even had a co-starring role as the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come in MICKEY'S CHRISTMAS CAROL (1983).

Speaking of the temperamental Duck, Donald was for all intents and purposes the villain in many of his own cartoons. Of course, since this is comedy, he usually took the brunt of his own machinations, especially when they were aimed at his three nephews. He is so mean-spirited in TRICK OR TREAT that Dewey, Louie, and Huey must solicit help from a witch to turn the tables on him. He is the dreaded embodiment of authority in TRUANT OFFICER DONALD, out to kill penguins in POLAR TRAPPERS, and ready, willing and unable to bump off a young bear cub in DUMB BELL OF THE YUKON, in order to furnish Daisy with a fur coat.

Like Donald, many Disney antagonists were victims of their own ineptitude. Captain Hook constantly falls prey to both Peter Pan and his own henchman, Mr. Smee, not to mention a certain crocodile. Brer Fox and Brer Bear never manage to outsmart Brer Rabbit in the Uncle Remus tales of SONG OF THE SOUTH.

The episodic nature of Colloidi's PINOCCHIO required a host of bad guys, none of whom leave a lasting impression. Honest John and Gideon try to lure the wooden boy into a life of crime only to sell him to the merciless puppeteer, Stromboli, whose animator, Vladimir Tytla, also worked



can't draw the line clearly and say, 'I did this all by myself,' because you have the storyman's work ahead of you and the layout man working with the director to set how the thing is going to be staged. So even if you did every drawing yourself, which you can't do, you can't take full credit for it."

The film animator is the equivalent of the live-action actors. As Thomas advises, "You have to be the actor. If you're going to give this character to Meryl Streep, to Helen Mirren, or to some sexpot, each one of them would bring an entirely different interpretation to the role, even though they were saying the same lines and doing the same business. Walt was good at casting animators and putting them on something that was beyond them but he thought they could rise to. He'd needle them on one side and stimulate on the other while giving them support to have them come through with something. During your early days on a character, he'd be tough while you were trying to come up with something he wanted. You'd finally come up with something that you, Walt, and the director were happy with."

The wicked stepsisters were the tough job on CINDERELLA that Johnston had to tackle. "I kept trying to get a hold of something for the Stepsisters that would make them more interesting and entertaining," he says. "Apparently, I went too far in making Anastasia ugly in one scene. Walt called me on that and asked me to change it. I made the changes; he agreed they were what he wanted. Walt didn't like things that were too unpleasant. I guess I went overboard in that case."

Sometimes the animator's plans are inadvertently thwarted by other departments. "I wanted a Marcel wave on Captain Hook's hair," says Thomas. "I wanted it coming down on his back because it embellished the features on his face, which were sharp and harsh—the big, square, long jaw. It wasn't a wide cowboy-type hero jaw. The hook nose was sharp and the eyebrows were pronounced, and he had a small forehead under the bangs on

**"Many people think that all the Disney villains are women, but there are only eight. All the rest are men. Women villains just seem to appeal to the public."**



More theatrical than threatening, ALICE IN WONDERLAND's Queen of Hearts is prone to shouting "Off with their heads!"—though to little real effect.

his wig. For some reason, we had poor communications with the layout man and particularly poor with the background painters. They always painted something dark behind Captain Hook, so you never saw the wave in his hair. It was just lost against darkness. We could have saved a lot of time and money had we known it was going to be painted that way."

ALICE IN WONDERLAND's maniacal Queen of Hearts, who would scream, "Off with their heads!" at the slightest provocation, didn't spare her animators either. "We had a tough time with the Queen because Walt didn't know what he wanted her to be," admits Thomas. "He wanted her to be mean and funny. I asked him what he wanted and not to have me flounder around. He said, 'Just animate something.' So I made some stuff, and he told me that I'd lost the menace. I'd made her too funny. So I'd go back and animate more stuff. He looked at it and said that now I'd lost the comedy. That was a difficult assignment."

Ward Kimball had designed most of the characters on the picture; Bill Peet, the storyman, also had a strong influence.

"Ward Kimball would take those drawings," says Thomas, "and work over them because Walt liked the drawing Ward was doing at that time. I'd go to Ward and ask him what Walt wanted on the Queen, and he'd say, 'Who the hell knows what Walt wants?'"

Character animation can be fun or challenging depending on the complexity. The animator must believe in each new character to bring it to believable life. "Some of them were more fun than others," admits Thomas. "Some were more of a challenge, like the Stepmother, which wasn't much fun to do but was a monstrous challenge. She had to be stronger than Cinderella and had to be drawn as carefully as Cinderella was. The Stepsisters could be a little broader, and the king and the duke could be a lot broader. But the Stepmother had to be drawn very carefully, or she wouldn't have been a strong enough villain and Cinderella wouldn't have been a strong enough victim, which you need to get a relationship that will affect the audience."

An interesting footnote to the Disney villains are the pets and sidekicks that seem to surround them [see sidebar]. Giv-

ing an insight into these characters, Thomas advises, "The villain has to have someone to play to when they're not talking directly to the victim or to somebody else. The Queen in SNOW WHITE had to have someone to talk to while she was making up her disguise and making the apple. She had that crow down in the dungeon laboratory. I never knew what he was doing down there. Was he going to be the next victim, or did she use him for neurological experiments? Whatever the dickens he was doing there, he did give her someone to talk to. When she finished the apple, she asks the crow, 'Want a bite?' Without him, she would have a hard time expressing herself. How is she going to show who she is if she doesn't have someone to talk to?"

"Those pets are really part of the personality of the villain," adds Johnston. "That was particularly true of Maleficent. Marc Davis designed Maleficent so that the raven and the magic cane were all part of her. Having the villains speak to their pets gave them a chance to open up something new in their personality."

"We usually gave them sidekicks. Sir Hiss was a sidekick Prince John could talk to, and Captain Hook had Mr. Smee. Those were the relationships Walt liked. He'd say that you developed the personality when the two characters work together and find out what they think of each other. Prince John had nothing but

CINDERELLA'S stepmother, typical of many Disney villains, has a pet.





contempt for Sir Hiss, and Sir Hiss couldn't do anything about it because he needed that job. He could never get a job anyplace else."

While cats abound in the studio's films, Disney was not too fond of the feline creatures. "Walt didn't like cats for a long time," says Johnston, "although his daughters loved them. Figaro from PINOCCHIO was the only cat he did like. In our early pictures, the cats were the villains. In PLUTO'S JUDGMENT DAY, Pluto goes to Hell, and there are all these cats tormenting him. The Siamese cats in LADY AND THE TRAMP were villains on their own. The Cheshire cat in ALICE IN WONDERLAND wasn't a true villain; he just tried to mislead Alice and send her off in the wrong direction. Lucifer, the Stepmother's cat, was a truly mean cat. He didn't like Cinderella; and, of course, he hated the mice. He did everything he could to make Cinderella's life miserable."

The two animators were around at the beginning and worked on the first animated feature, SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS. "There were eight of us," remembers Thomas, "and we all worked on all the dwarves. We'd pass each other in the halls, shake our heads and say, 'Seven of them! Seven of them!' We'd have three or four or more in a scene and have to figure out different business for each of them to do. Then you'd have to find room for the feet—they all had big feet. There's the scene

Lucifer, however, goes beyond a pet, to be a villain in his own right.



The wicked stepmother and stepsisters in CINDERELLA, without magical powers or evil spells, presented a less grandiose image of villainy.

at the end where the Prince is putting Snow White on the horse to take her away. Everyone is waving goodbye, and he picks all the dwarves up. Someone in the effects department had already done all the birds and little rabbits and squirrels and there's no room for the dwarves. I asked if I had to put all seven dwarves in there and they said yes. I said, 'But there's no place to go; they're stepping on every forest creature you have.' All they said was, 'Oh, you can work that out.' That was a miserable thing to try to do."

When work on PINOCCHIO was temporarily halted by Walt Disney, the animators were put to work on the studio's cartoons. Thomas animated the bear that menaces Mickey Mouse in THE POINTER, a beautifully rendered short, while Johnston worked on Mickey and Pluto. "The problem with the bear was to make him stupid," says Thomas. "To make him perplexed enough or curious enough so Mickey could hold him at bay just by talking to him. That was a tricky thing to do because if you did too much of that you would lose your menace. You'd feel Mickey could talk his way out of this situation. You had to keep the appearance that the bear would only be delayed so long and then he's going to come and tear Mickey to pieces."

Thomas and Johnston found that the most difficult part of producing their book was not getting the material but working with the publisher. "On the BAMBI book, we had a

guy who insisted on marketing it as a kid's book. It was an art book, but he said that we didn't know anything about publishing. When the book came out, it was only in the children's section. They went bankrupt and sold off all the copies they had remaining. Of course, we don't get any royalties on that. At Abbeville, the publisher sold off all the extras he had at such a low price we wouldn't get any royalties off that either. So you don't make any money doing these art books, even though you make a big sale in relation to other art books. Fortunately, we were never in it for the money."

However, the popularity of the books gave the two authors name recognition and another venue for their talents, a path to the college and university talk circuit. "People invited us to do speeches and travel around, and they pay for all that," says Thomas. "At least with our first book, *The Illusion of Life*, we were on all of the 'Ten Best Books for Christmas' lists. We had good publicity on that, but we've had to dig up the best publicity on *The Disney Villains* ourselves. We did have a lady out here in charge of publicity. They gave her one week to sell us to the world, and that was the week of our big fire. We were scheduled to appear on several network shows, but as we went to each television studio, they'd say their cameraman and crew were all out in Malibu at the fire and we'd have to be rescheduled at a later date. We lost nearly half the things we were going to do."

with Wolfgang Reitherman on *Monstro the Whale*. Escaping the rotund villain, Pinocchio falls prey to the Coachman (the work of animator Charles Nichols), whose promises of wonderful Pleasure Island hide a horrible secret. Finally the puppet and his conscience, Jiminy Cricket, launch into a search for his father inside the belly of Disney's biggest ruffian, Monstro the Whale.

The "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" segment of Disney's THE ADVENTURES OF ICHABOD AND MR. TOAD (1949) featured two villains: the good-natured braggart, Brom Bones, who is after fair Katrina Van Tassel, daughter of a wealthy land owner; and the legendary Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow. Milt Kahl, Ollie Johnston, and Frank Thomas shared animation duties on Bones; the task of bringing life to the demonic Headless Horseman fell to Wolfgang Reitherman. When rival Ichabod Crane arrives on the scene, Brom tries to scare him away with the story of the ghostly equestrian. The setting of the haunted Hollow and the spectral Horseman were so frightening that the Studio played Ichabod's terrified flight for laughs to relieve the tension.

Following Walt Disney's death in 1966, the villain stable fell on hard times, adding few interesting new characters. Though George Saunders' Shere Khan in THE JUNGLE BOOK was an effective predecessor to Scar, even the voice characterizations of Peter Ustinov and Terry Thomas couldn't make ROBIN HOOD's Prince John and Sir Hiss memorable. Milt Kahl's creation, Madame Medusa in THE RESCUERS, doesn't quite match the gleeful villainy of Cruella De Vil, and THE BLACK CAULDRON's Horned King never lives up to his evil potential.

At last, in 1986, THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE indicated that Disney was getting back on the right track, with the help of Vincent Price's Epicurean brand of evil as the voice of Ratigan. But 1989 was

continued on page 40



# The Disney VILLAINS

## THE NEXT GENERATION

*Andreas Deja is the studio's new "villainmeister."*

*By Dan Scapperotti*

With the resurgence of Disney animation, a new breed of animators is following the footsteps of the studio's legendary nine old men. Among these is Andreas Deja, who has been described by producer Don Hahn as the studio's reigning villainmeister.

The German-born animator was profoundly affected by Walt Disney's *THE JUNGLE BOOK* when he saw the film at age 11. He decided animation would be his career. He wrote to the studio and quickly realized that you didn't become an animator by sending in drawings of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck. You first became an artist.

Master animator Eric Larson encouraged the young art student, and Deja found his life-long ambition fulfilled when he started work at the Disney Studios in August 1980.

The studio was just finishing *THE FOX AND THE HOUND* when Deja arrived. "I was fresh off the boat, basically, and I had a job at Disney," he remembers. "When I started there I expected to be an assistant for 20 years or so to somebody like Frank Thomas or Ollie Johnston, so it was a shock to see that all the old guys were gone and it was really just us left."

Design work on the studio's next feature, *THE BLACK CAULDRON*, hadn't begun so they assigned Deja to work with a young animator named Tim Burton. "They told me that Tim had this funky drawing style," Deja continues, "and maybe the two of us could work out something unique for *THE BLACK CAULDRON*. I worked with Tim for almost a year in the old animation build-

**"I enjoyed Gaston because he didn't look like a villain. I liked Jafar's more sophisticated style. As for Scar, he almost makes the others look like clowns."**



Animator Andreas Deja supervised work on Disney's three most recent villains, worthy to rank along side the studio's classic grandmasters of evil.

ing. It didn't work out, because they didn't go for Tim's quirky style. So Tim left, and I stayed on and animated on that movie and all the ones after that."

While the young animator has worked on several characters at the studio—including Bianca, Bernard, Oliver, and the Mouse that started it all—he has found his niche on the wrong side of the tracks. Deja has been animating the current crop of Disney cartoon bad guys. The first of these was boisterous Gaston from *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*.

"I had a little bit of a problem on Gaston," he admits. "I didn't quite have a hold on the character early on. I saw the storyboards and heard Richard White's voice. I thought Gas-

ton was very beefy with a square jaw, and he looked like a cartoon character. So I did a test of the opening sequence where he is singing to the crowd, and the directors loved it. I thought I was onto something. I gave him a big jaw and a slightly cartoony mustache. When Jeffrey Katzenberg saw that he said, 'The animation is fine, but he just doesn't look handsome.' Handsome!? He's the villain. He said, 'No, I want the girls in the audience to swoon over him.' He then explained that this movie wasn't about *Beauty and the Beast*; it was really about 'don't judge the book by the cover'—the physical appearance doesn't matter. It's inner quality that matters. So you have the

beast who is hideous and ugly and scary, and you find out he has a heart of gold. On the other hand, you have Gaston who's handsome and looks like the hero, but he's a real son of a bitch and stupid and a chauvinist. Finally I got it. And I went back and beautified Gaston."

Deja then found himself in an *Arabian Nights* setting and confronted by another villain, Jafar, the evil sorcerer, who menaces Aladdin. When developing the character, all Deja had to go on was actor Jonathan Freeman's voice. "I thought this was an interesting voice, kind of snobby and arrogant. I had no idea what Jonathan Freeman looked like. I looked at some of the sketches people had done. Gaston had to be drawn realistically so that he works with Belle. On this one I wanted to have something a bit more abstract. Maybe a face that looks like a mask and a real skinny body—more stylization and caricature. So I came up with something that I thought would work with that voice, something very elegant and smooth. The funny thing is that when Jonathan Freeman stopped by to visit afterwards, I said, 'I can't believe it. I thought you were long and skinny and eerie and you're kind of chubby. I couldn't put that voice with Jonathan.'"

As is often the case in animation, when more than one character shares a scene, each is animated by a different artist. Jafar had his feathered sidekick, Iago the parrot, which was animated by Will Finn.

"It was sort of interesting," says Deja, "because Jafar and Iago worked so closely. And this one is sitting on my character's shoulder. In animation, you usually have a character that motivates a scene and an-





Deja originally drew Gaston as a caricature of evil, complete with twirling mustache, before settling on a deceptively handsome appearance.

favorite Disney characters. I didn't want to do something like that. Shere Khan had George Sanders, who was also British and upper crust, and I was very much aware of that. In both design and emotion, I tried not to repeat that character. There is the danger of taking that design and modifying it. So I decided I wouldn't look at that. Instead, I would look at Jeremy Irons and real lions."

For the animator, *THE LION KING* presented some artistic challenges. "This was my first four-legged animal," says Deja. "I did *Roger Rabbit*, but that's sort of a human character anyway; and I've done Mickey Mouse, and that's no more a mouse than anything. They're all humanized. Here I had a real lion."

The animator has a full-length mirror in his office which he uses to define his characters, but here he found it failed him. "When Gaston was fighting the beast, I had a broomstick in my hand and I just swung it back and forth to analyze the follow-through and see, technically, how you go through the motions and break it down by acting it out. For the scene where Scar is pacing back and forth on a ledge watching Mufasa during the wildebeest stampede, I thought this was going to be fun, so I approached the mirror. Holy Caramba! I realized, 'The mirror isn't going to get me anywhere. I can't act it out. I can't walk like a lion.' Luckily, we had an intensive training program at the studio with real lions and a lot of National Geographic videos so that helped."

So I try to incorporate that into the design of the first scenes I did with him, which are his conversation with Simba talking about the elephant graveyard. That was the first bit of animation that I did with Scar. I wanted to capture some of Jeremy Irons' facial features: he's got dark circles under his eyes; he has intense eyes; he has a stiff upper lip with a slightly British, above-it-all aristocratic quality."

Problems that face all animators in creating characters are the threat of repetition. On *THE LION KING*, Deja had to confront his own inspiration and avoid it. "The danger here was a comparison to Shere Khan from *THE JUNGLE BOOK*, which is one of my fa-

Jafar had a slightly more sophisticated design quality than Gaston. Also, he has the most helpful pet of any Disney villain, Iago, animated by Will Finn.



other character who reacts. If Jafar was motivating the scene, I would then give it to Will Finn, and he would have Iago react. If Iago was yelling in Jafar's ear, then I'd tell Will, 'Well, this is about where Jafar's shoulder would be, why don't you go in and animate the parrot, and then I'll have him react.' The reacting character is usually animated second. You animate on different cels using a light desk. It's the same as Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston working on *Captain Hook* and *Smee*."

Disney unleashed its latest animated feature, *THE LION KING*, this summer, and Deja was on board with his third villain in a row. In the film's stunning opening sequences, Mufasa, the Lion King, presents his infant son, Simba, to the animal kingdom. The vicious Scar, Mufasa's evil and ambitious brother, sees Simba blocking his path to the throne and sets out to destroy him.

Actor Jeremy Irons had been cast as the voice of the treacherous Scar when Deja stepped up to the drawing board. "I thought that was an interesting choice," advises Deja. "I looked at some Jeremy Irons movies and thought, 'Maybe there is something other than I can take design-wise from him.' There is sort of a weird look to him, an iciness.



For Scar, Deja took inspiration from actor Jeremy Irons, particularly the deep-eyed aristocratic look.

Deja finds a challenge and pleasure in each of his trio of villains. "I enjoyed Gaston because he was a villain who didn't look like a villain. That's just a bizarre interesting assignment to make someone act like a villain even though he doesn't look like one. Difficult but interesting."

"I like Jafar's graphical nature and the design quality and stylization of the whole movie—a slightly more sophisticated style which I really enjoyed: the dialogue scenes, the bizarre mouth shapes and movements. I just loved working with Jafar."

"As far as Scar goes, he almost makes the other ones look like clowns—he is so evil. He's is such a psycho villain. There are more aspects to his villainy than the other two. As far as screen time, he's much more in the movie than the other two. Not in just being bad, but in all kinds of mannerisms and attitudes that are Scar. He is so sarcastic and slimy—a master of words and manipulation."

Next up for the animator is a change of pace. He'll be working with Mickey Mouse again in a new cartoon short, *THE RUNAWAY BRAIN*. Deja will supervise the animation on the haunted house tale to be produced this summer in France. □



truly the studio's banner year. With the release of *THE LITTLE MERMAID*, Disney squelched the ambitions of any pretenders to the throne of cinematic animation and raked in millions in the process. Ursula, the tentacled Sea Witch (animated by Ruben Aquino), although lacking the murderous appetite of some of her predecessors, was a conniving, demonic presence under the sea. And she sang! While plotting to steal Ariel's lovely voice, Ursula could match even the Wicked Queen's vanity.

Two years later, *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST* reexamined the old adage that beauty is only skin deep. While the ugly Beast (animated by Glen Keane) is the hero, it is the attractive but conceited Gaston who wears the villainous mantle. Andreas Deja supervised creating the illusion of life for the character, who is a reworking of Brom Bones, the swaggering braggart in *ICHABOD AND MR. TOAD*. Whereas Bones used a song to frighten the spindly Crane, Gaston uses a similar method to enrage the villagers against the Beast, hoping to rid himself of a rival for Belle.

The villainous renaissance continues with the sorcerer Jafar in the wildy successful *ALADDIN* and the treacherous Scar in the current blockbuster *THE LION KING*. With a line up including an animated version of *THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME*, Disney artists will be busy into the next century; and, you can bet, those fiends who are fun to watch will be along for the ride.

**THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE** features an unusual villain-pet relationship between a rat and a cat, with the evil Ratigan as the master.



# The Disney VILLAINS

## BEST FRIENDS

*Pets, not sidekicks, earn their masters' affection.*

By Mike Lyons

Unconditional loyalty. They say all pets possess it: the ability to love their masters no matter what. Nowhere is this more evident than in the case of the Disney villains: through the years, their pets have stood fast with them—no matter what.

Not all Disney villains have been animal lovers. Cruella De Vil, for example, liked dalmatians only for their fur, and Captain Hook never shook hands with a crocodile. But, for the most part, there has been a relationship between villains and pets since Disney's first animated feature, *SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS*. In that film, the role played by the wicked Queen's raven may not have been the largest, but it was the beginning of a trend. Of the 32 animated films that followed, nine provided villains with pets. Some were abused and some were adored, but all

of them were faithful to the evil that their masters did.

Take, for example, *CINDERELLA*'s wicked stepmother and her lethargic cat, Lucifer. Their relationship is so close that the animators chose to give them a similar feature. This is evident in the scene wherein Cinderella is called to her stepmother's bedroom. Lucifer sits on the stepmother's lap, under the darkness of the canopy, and the audience sees only two sets of glowing yellow eyes.

Lucifer's animator, Ward Kimball, based the character on his own lazy house cat, but Lucifer becomes much more than just a pet in the film. The cat becomes a villain in his own right. While the stepmother provides the evil for the main story line, Lucifer does the same for the film's subplot, terrorizing Jaq, Gus, and the rest of the mice. Lucifer even acts as an ally to the stepmother (perhaps unwittingly), as he tries to foil the mice's attempts to free Cinderella toward the film's climax.

In *SLEEPING BEAUTY*, another villainous pet helps carry out his master's plans. When Maleficent's goons fail to find Princess Aurora, she sends out her faithful raven (possibly a distant cousin of the one from *SNOW WHITE*). The raven spots "magic dust" coming from a chimney in a wooded cottage and sees that this is where the three good fairies are hiding the princess. This discovery allows Maleficent to capture Prince Philip and set her plan in motion. Essentially, if it weren't for her raven,

Maleficent would still be sitting in her castle on Forbidden Mountain, nursing an ulcer.

In this case, the villain-pet relationship is very close, so close in fact that the animating duties for both were given over to one man, Marc Davis. When watching their film, one can see that Mr. Davis created a symbiotic relationship in the physical appearance of the characters. Like the stepmother and Lucifer, Maleficent and her raven share similar evil eyes that seem to be squinting at the world. In addition to this, both wear black, of course, and both of their bodies are made up of sharp, angular shapes. We also get a sense of how close their relationship is during the film's climax. When the raven discovers that the three good fairies are helping Prince Philip escape, his "caws" alert Malefi-

**PETER PAN**'s Captain Hook is a rare villain with no appreciation for the attention he receives from animals.







Before Iago, Flotsam and Jetsam were the first pets to speak, helping them lure Ariel to their master, Ursula.

cent's goons, but for all his troubles, the raven is turned to stone by one of the fairies. When Maleficent sees this, there's hell to pay—literally.

A similar relationship exists in *THE RESCUERS* between Madame Medusa and her crocodiles, Nero and Brutus. Unlike her bungling sidekick, Mr. Snoops, the crocs actually help Medusa carry out her plans after she kidnaps young Penny. When Penny escapes one night into the swamp, Medusa says, "Nero, Brutus...bring her back, boys!" And that they do. Nero and Brutus even have a hand in foiling the plans of Bernard and Bianca, the two Rescue Aid Society mice who come to help Penny. The reptiles trap the Rescuers in an old pipe organ and try to play the mice out, in hopes of a little fast food.

Crocodiles may seem like unorthodox domestic pets, but the strangest master-pet relationship in all the Disney films has to be that between Rattigan and his cat, Felicia, in *THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE*. It's probably the first, and only, time in cinema history that a rodent had a feline pet.

Ratigan uses all those around him (his mice thugs and Fidget the bat) to do his dirty work. Felicia is also a pawn in Ratigan's game of treason against the crown and Basil of Baker Street; in fact, she acts as her master's executioner. One of the dirty rat's many

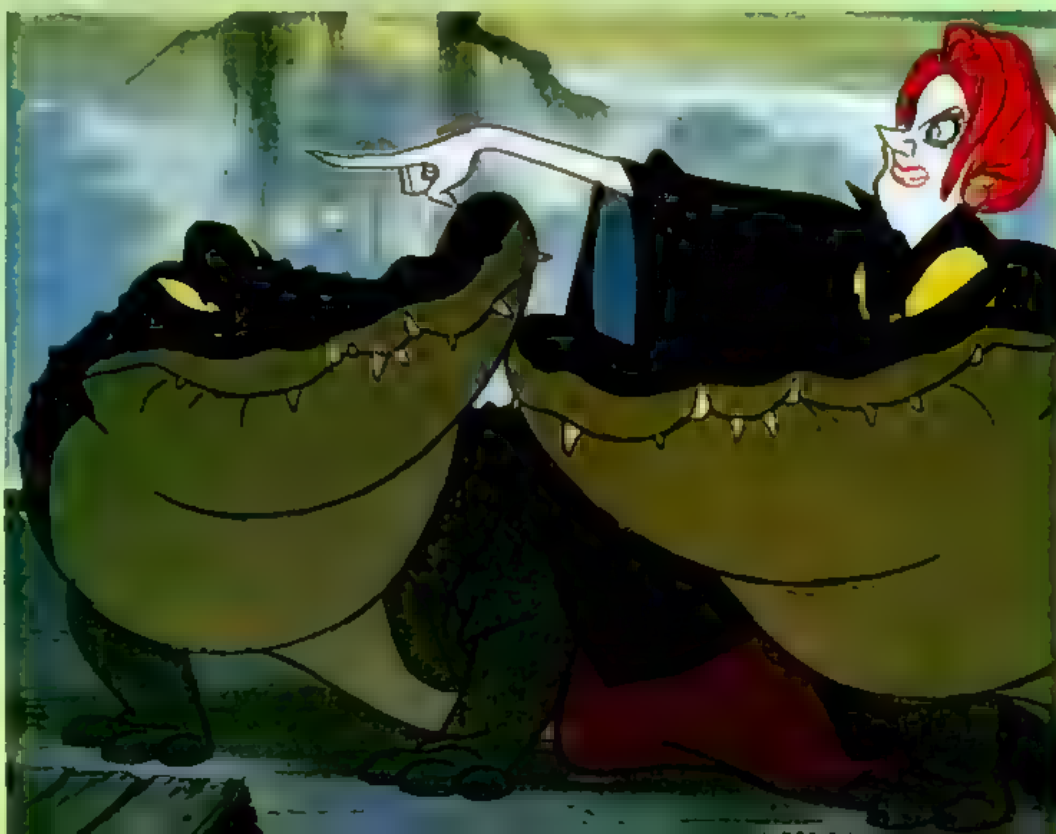
problems is his identity crisis (he's a "big mouse," and don't forget it!). When one inebriated mouse inadvertently calls him a rat, Rattigan rings a bell, and it's supper time for Felicia. Later, when Fidget bungles a plan, the same fate nearly befalls the bat; having the advantage of wings, however, he manages to elude Felicia's jaws. The portly cat even plays a part in Ratigan's attempt to usurp the throne. Felicia tries to dine on the Queen, until Basil's pet dog Toby (another interesting relationship) intercedes.

More recent villain-pet relationships have reflected those of past films. In *OLIVER AND COMPANY*, the roles of Sykes and his Dobermans, Roscoe and DeSoto, are similar to that of *CINDERELLA*'s Stepmother and Lucifer. In *OLIVER*, Sykes terrorizes Fagin in the "human world" and uses Roscoe and DeSoto to do the same to Oliver, Dodger, and the other canine members of Fagin's gang.

With Ursula and her pet eels, Flotsam and Jetsam, in *THE LITTLE MERMAID*, we're back to a villain-pet relationship reminiscent of Maleficent and her raven. Like the raven, the two eels help their master carry out her plan. Flotsam and Jetsam lure Ariel into Ursula's lair, where the sea-witch is able to snatch Ariel's voice. As with Maleficent, the accidental death of Flotsam and Jetsam during the film's climactic battle sequence (the two eels are toasted by Triton's trident) shows Ursula feeling true remorse for the loss of her pets and only succeeds at incurring her wrath.

One interesting note about

Like many pets of the Disney villains, Nero and Brutus in *THE RESCUERS* prove much more useful to their master, Medusa, than her human sidekick.



Maleficent and her raven were a truly symbiotic pair, thanks to animator Marc Davis, who gave a similar angular appearance to both of them.

*THE LITTLE MERMAID* is that it is the first time a villainous pet has ever spoken. This dynamic expands the characters of Flotsam and Jetsam from pets to co-conspirators, anticipating a later relationship in *ALADDIN*.

Unlike Ursula and her eels, the villain-pet relationship in *THE RESCUERS DOWN UNDER* is much more abusive. Joanna, the pet lizard of Percival MacLeach, wants nothing more than to earn her master's affection, but he's a hard man to please. During the course of the outback sequel to *THE RESCUERS*, poor Joanna is physically and verbally abused, as MacLeach grows more and more frustrated trying to get his hands on Marahute the eagle. MacLeach even threatens to shoot poor Joanna at one point! Joanna (beautifully animated by David Cutler) does all she can to please her master, but in all fairness to MacLeach, she also seems to go out of her way to get on his nerves, when stealing his eggs, for example.

Such actions may not do a lot for this master-pet relationship, but it did provide audiences with great moments of comic relief.

The latest and possibly best villain-pet combo was that of Jafar and Iago the parrot in *ALADDIN*. It's unfair to call Iago a mere pet, however; he's really a sidekick and co-conspirator, disguised as a pet. His ability to talk (Gilbert Gottfried's voice seems made for Iago) allows him to conspire with Jafar. Iago is actually the one who comes up with the idea of Jafar's marrying the princess, and he's also the one who steals the lamp so that Jafar can carry out the plan. If Maleficent's raven had been this cunning, the Beauty would probably still be Sleeping.

Iago's supervising animator, Will Finn, did a great job of incorporating many of Gilbert Gottfried's expressions, such as his grimace and hunched shoulders, without letting the comedian's hilarious performance overshadow the character. The animators had originally conceived Iago as suave and Jafar as high strung, but, luckily for us, the personalities were reversed.

At the end of *ALADDIN*, when Iago is trapped in a magic lamp with Jafar, he suffers a fate that has befallen all of Disney's villainous pets (with the possible exception of Joanna, who was spared having to share her master's demise). For when good conquers evil, their masters are conquered—and so are they. Hey, no one said it was easy being a villain's best friend. □





Below: "You're a very funny man, but I've met funnier—and so shall you," says Christopher Lee's mysterious character after losing his ancestral estate in a card game. Above: the cause of Lee's remark, the eponymous Funny Man.



# THE

## Could this be

*By Alan Jones*

Christopher Lee returns to the genre that made him world famous in the \$1 million horror comedy *THE FUNNY MAN*. First-time director Simon Sprackling pulled off the coup simply by telephoning Lee and asking if he'd take a look at a script he'd just written about a music industry man winning an ancestral home haunted by a malevolent spirit. "Lee called straight back asking to meet and, over coffee at a hotel near his London home in Knightsbridge, ranted for hours, telling me a million anecdotes. Just after the one about how he'd been offered the Donald Pleasence part in *HALLOWEEN* by John Carpenter and turned it down, he went on at length about the terrible horror scripts he gets sent all the time. Then he added, 'But I liked yours, so I'll do it.'"

That was music to the ears of Sprackling and his producer Nigel Odell, who had hoped to attract someone of Lee's stature to give *THE FUNNY MAN* a high profile for prospective distributors after a very unusual development period. The story begins with ex-Image Animation makeup man Neill Gorton, who contributed special effects to *HELLRAISER II*, *NIGHTBREED* and *THE UNHOLY*, among many others. Gorton explains, "I left Image Animation and wrote a script for a short titled *FAMILY MEAL* about an *au pair* girl who isn't what she seems. Nigel and Simon read my screenplay and said they wanted to make it."

"Two weeks after I'd given them my screenplay, Nigel rang with both good and bad news," continues Gorton. "The good news was they had

raised the \$16,000 for the 30-minute short. The bad news was my script had turned into something called *THE HAND OF FATE*! Halfway through the seven-day shoot, we all decided *HAND OF FATE* sounded incredibly tacky and changed the title to *THE FUNNY MAN*." Odell adds, "The idea was always to turn it into a feature if we could. But if all else failed we knew we'd be able to sell what we already had to television and recoup the cost."

With the short tucked under his arm, Odell set up shop at the 1992 MIFED market in Milan and instantly received lots of interest from American buyers, who saw *THE FUNNY MAN* character as franchisable in the Freddy Krueger tradition. So much so in fact *THE FUNNY MAN* feature began attracting financial investment from private individuals and commitments from a cast and crew who agreed to work for a share of the final profits on deferred payments. Snaring Christopher Lee, albeit for only two days of highly concentrated work as the mysterious gambler, was the icing on the cake.

Shooting on *THE FUNNY MAN* proper (none of the half-hour short remains in the final print) began mid-July 1993 on location at an unused mental asylum in Henley-on-Thames. Three weeks later the production moved to Shepperton Studios where key fourth-dimension fantasy sequences were filmed on a village backlot built by ABC-TV for their defunct medieval soap opera *COVINGTON CROSS*. Joining Lee in the cast are Benny Young, Ingrid Lacey, Chris Walker, Pauline Black (from the pop group Selector) and Tim James, who plays the title jok-



# FUNNY MAN

## the last word in comedy-horror films?

er.

Thirty-three-year-old Sprackling describes **THE FUNNY MAN** as "Monty Python meets Blaxploitation meets Freddy Krueger in the Twilight Zone." The ex-punk rocker, a former singer with the bands No Fixed Hairstyle and The Puffin Club continues, "The hardest thing to put across to people is the difference between the Funny Man character and Freddy, Jason, and Michael Myers. This doesn't follow the 'say a one-liner, turn nasty and kill a teen' formula. It's all about the comic value in everyday violence. And the whole idea of the false ending has reached such ludicrous proportions. No one can kill Freddy, so what's the point in trying? I haven't got one of those endings for that reason. The Funny Man can't die—end of subject. I just like the idea that everyone he comes into contact with doesn't have a chance. The interest in the film comes from what he's doing it all for. What's he getting out of it? Basically it's all about having a huge laugh at everyone else's expense."

While Sprackling included many jokes in his script, he's the first to admit most of the truly hilarious laughs have been ad-libbed by Tim James as the demented harlequin. Says James, who also served as associate producer, "Not until I put the Funny Man mask on for the first time did I know what I could do in it or what I'd be capable of from an action-horror point of view. Because I had to carry out my production tasks often in full makeup, I gave others quite a shock! I must say I used that for my own ends

and the good of the movie. Quite honestly the character is just me doing what I've always wanted to do, but getting away with it because I'm in disguise."

Neill Gorton based that disguise on a number of inspirational images. He says, "Basically, he's the joker in a pack of cards, the harlequin with a lot of Mr. Punch thrown in. The grotesque Punch and Judy analogy is a very apt one because he talks to the audience and then pops back into the show. His costume incorporates Mr. Punch's pigeon-chest and hump back too along with a phallic cod-piece. I was given exactly a week and a half to get all the special effects together, and until the first day of shooting on the short version, no one knew what **THE FUNNY MAN** would look like."

Aside from makeup chores on the title character, Gorton has also had to devise numerous sick murders. "But, while the deaths are gory, the accent is always on the deadpan humor, and while you may be scared one minute, you're laughing hysterically the next," he remarks.

Gorton's favorite splatter moment is one which he feels sums up the whole comic tone of **THE FUNNY MAN**: "A girl has her brains blown out by Funny Man shooting a blunderbuss straight at her head. We see the brains fly across the air, radio-controlled eyeballs look left and right—wearing glasses, too—and splat on the kitchen wall. It's very violent, but in a surreal Tex Avery cartoonish way. I think this will be fun for audiences to watch."

The director adds, "The Funny Man has much in com-

mon with the unpredictability of a typically English drunken hooligan. You know, the sort of lout you meet in a nightclub back alley, who asks you for a light, and before you know it, an edginess has crept into the conversation which rapidly turns into a fight for no reason. That's the sort of violence I know about, the dangerous punk ethic I'm trying to imbue into the film. If I had my way, I'd love to advertise it with the tag line, 'THE FUNNY MAN. What a cunt!' That really says it all."

That Sprackling's script was peppered with such strong language did concern Christopher Lee a great deal. "Not the bloodshed, you understand," laughs Sprackling. "He thought all the gore was justified. But he wouldn't say any four-letter words. Lee plays two roles in the movie really. One within the film, the other within my conception of horror movie history. As the Callum character, he loses at cards all night and doesn't seem too concerned. Throughout the rest of the story you see him in a strangely ethereal white room surrounded by a house of cards. Essentially he's the manipulator. He could be God, Death, the Devil, a magician or something else. All you learn is he's an omnipotent enigma within the story and he knows what lurks in the house he loses to Max. His second role is as the first real horror personality I ever recognized or paid attention to. In the context of the opening card game sequence, I want the audience to be thinking, 'Don't cross him. It's Christopher Lee. It's all going to go horribly wrong.' We all



Makeup by Neill Gorton turns actor and associate producer Tim James into the harlequin-like Funny Man.

know who Lee is and what he stands for. But one of the many jokes in **THE FUNNY MAN** is I invert that feeling from Lee being 'boo' scary to idiot scary."

Horror films have to be about something other than just horror, or else they aren't interesting by Sprackling's reckoning. He points out, "THE FUNNY MAN is about being lucky, about being in the right place at the right time and about major events that change your life for better or worse. It's a risky comic-horror tone I'm aiming for, I know. This will either be my finest hour or a complete disaster. But there's no point in anyone getting stressed out over it. If I've fucked it up, there's bugger all I can do about it now." □



# BRAVE NEW WORLDS?

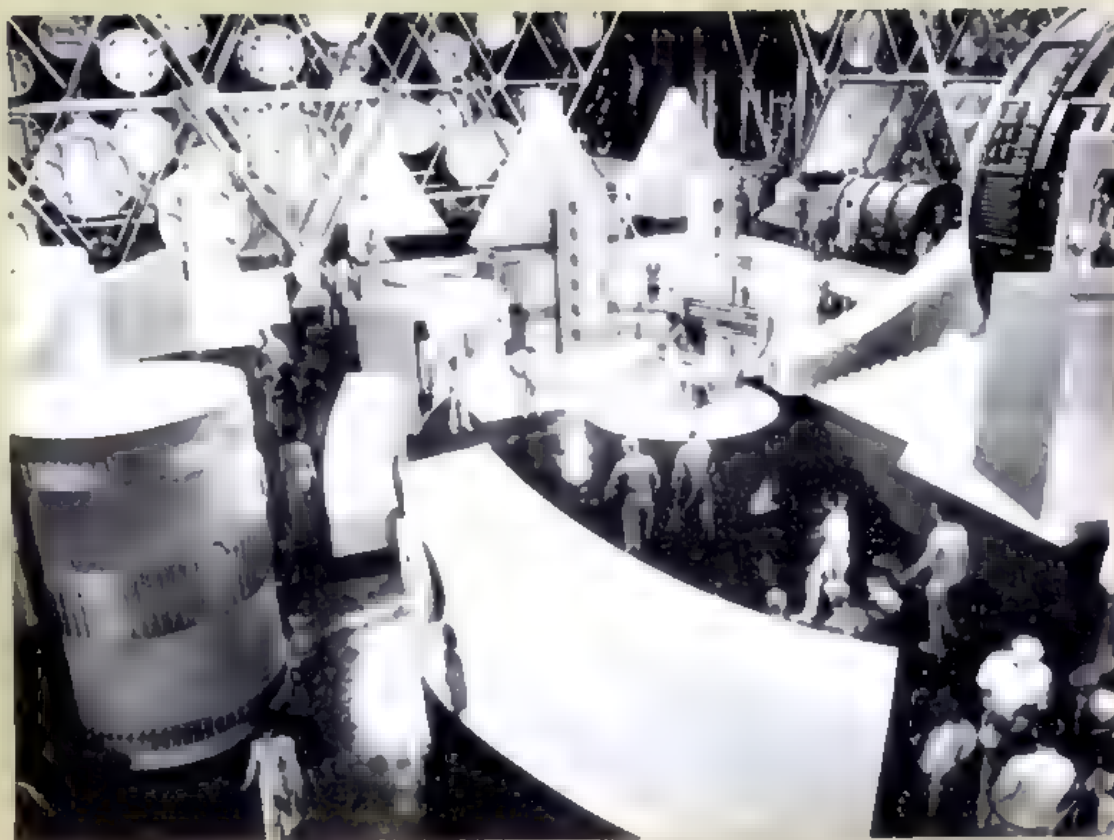
## The "Utopia as Dystopia" motif in DEMOLITION MAN and other genre films.

By Matthew F. Saunders

While dystopian futures are a common genre theme seen in numerous films such as *BLADE RUNNER*, *TERMINATOR*, *MAD MAX*, and *PREDATOR II*, utopian futures are always interwoven with dystopic qualities. These future societies, no matter how seemingly perfect, always hide some combination of stagnation, conformity, and monitored existence.

Director Marco Brambilla and producer Joel Silver resurrected the "utopia as dystopia" formula in *DEMOLITION MAN* to address what they see as the proliferation of political correctness in American society. As production designer David L. Snyder stated in *CFQ* (December 1993), "Any time someone wants a place to be too perfect, there's a price to pay." Thomas More demonstrated this in his 1516 novel *Utopia*, and *DEMOLITION MAN* attempts to continue the tradition.

Admittedly, *DEMOLITION MAN* does an adequate job of painting an idealized future. But it lacks originality, borrowing with modest effect from numerous genre conventions and incorporating them into its action scenario. In fact, it is just this borrowing that earns *DEMOLITION MAN* its only modicum of respectability, for it is the strength of the "utopia as dystopia" conventions that sustain the otherwise simplistic and



*BRAVE NEW WORLD* is an excellent example of the "utopia as dystopia" motif. Society's offer of perfect happiness masks elements of stagnation and conformity.

overly ironic parable of a violent hero as savior of the future.

In this respect, *DEMOLITION MAN* is in good company. A handful of films over the last two decades have made use, in one form or another, of themes prevalent in utopia/dystopia fiction. The most obvious and immediate convention is that of the misplaced hero. Spartan and Phoenix time travel to the future, via the Cryo-Penitentiary, and find themselves in a world that regards them with a mixture of disgust and bewilderment. Moral (mis)direction aside, they are men of action and ambition, moved to create and destroy—to live with a purpose beyond simple existence. San Angeles offers peace, but no passion—individuality and social momentum have been

sacrificed for, as Brambilla stated (*CFQ* October 1993) "the safety of living together in a harmonious way."

We find our most ready comparison to Spartan and Phoenix in H.G. Wells' *Time Traveler*. Whether in Wells' novel *The Time Machine* or George Pal's film adaptation, the *Time Traveler* is similarly frustrated by the Eloi's lack of passion. The citizens of San Angeles are not lambs ready for slaughter, and Lt. Huxley (a blatant tribute to *BRAVE NEW WORLD*'s author Aldous Huxley) is certainly no Weena, but one recognizes the same stagnation of thought and ease of life that will eventually lead down the Eloi's path. Huxley does question her world, latching onto Spartan immediately,

just as Weena attaches to the *Time Traveler*, but the extent of her social conditioning is continually evident during her attempts to affect a Spartanesque lifestyle of her own.

Spartan, Phoenix, and the *Time Traveler* are strangers confounded by worlds dealt the mortal blow of complacency. They then become sculptors of bland clay, given free rein to rejuvenate and elevate these lost worlds into what they believe is a more realized level of humanity. They become mediators of the future, imposing strong wills on vacant societies and leading them down new yet familiar paths.

The motif of the stranger is not limited to time travelers. The genre more often finds the stranger already present within society. In 1984, *BRAVE NEW WORLD*, *LOGAN'S RUN*, *SILENT RUNNING*, *BRAZIL*, *FAHRENHEIT 451*, *THX-1138*, *METROPOLIS*, *THE HANDMAID'S TALE*, *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK*, *FORTRESS*, and *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE*, the central character is a member of society who becomes disenfranchised with its current state and his/her place within it, and withdraws from its normal flow, establishing new behavior patterns contrary to the norm and/or acting deliberately to change the status quo.

For example, in 1984, Winston Smith seeks comfort and love, engaging in an illicit affair that jeopardizes his status within a dehumanized society. Smith is eventually caught, tor-



tured, and re-dehumanized for reabsorption into society. In *LOGAN'S RUN*, Logan is forced to learn the truth about the domed city, a truth which leads him to escape, challenge, and destroy a society which he now knows is built on lies. And in yet another variation, Alex in *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE* is placed outside of society by society itself, conditioned to be non-violent in a violent world he previously relished to its fullest. All of the above movies function on one or a combination of these levels, placing the protagonist at odds with a society that appeals to a utopic level of uniformity and bliss, despite its effects on truth, individuality, and independent thought.

Prevalent throughout *DEMOLITION MAN* and these movies is the convention of control and power over these key points: truth, individuality, and independent thought. In *DEMOLITION MAN* there is the homogenized citizenry of San Angeles, which is devoid of ethnicity, and the verbal morality statue, which punishes forbidden speech. 1984, of course, has Newspeak. In *FORTRESS* and *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* there is control over one's procreative rights. Zed-10, the omnipotent computer in *FORTRESS*, disrupts convicts' unauthorized thought processes and dreams, while the titular THX-1138 and his fellow citizens are pumped full of sedatives to keep their thoughts in line in George Lucas' film. Offred in *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* resists the handmaiden brainwashing designed to legitimate her enslavement. The destruction of books in *FAHRENHEIT 451* is the equalizing factor there, under the rationale that if one person reads a book that another hasn't, it grants him/her knowledge and, thus, power over the other. But even this attempt at equalization fails to account for the personal experiencing of life.

Freeman Lowell in *SILENT RUNNING* rejects his society—where, according to him, everything and everyone is exactly the same—because he appreciates, on a personal level, the



**THE TIME MACHINE**, with its violent confrontation between the Time Traveler (Rod Hunter) and an underground society in the future, prefigures *DEMOLITION MAN*.

importance of nature and his duty to it. When he acts to save the last remaining forest pod, his actions are based on personal duty and loyalty to a society he envisions, not to society as it currently exists. In *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK*, Snake Plissken is so disenfranchised that he privileges his own individuality above society. He demonstrates this by destroying the president's tape, after participating in rescuing the president only to ensure his own survival. Sam Lowry provides one of the most poignant examples of this theme in *BRAZIL*. Even after his torturers attempt to destroy his mind, he still finds freedom in his imagination and dreams. It is a rich fantasy world that is completely his own, incorruptible by erstwhile thought police or unity enhancing social constructions.

*DEMOLITION MAN* does the convention of control and obstruction the least amount of justice, choosing to play it for easy laughs. Huxley's wavering social conformity juxtaposes her against Spartan, making them comic foils for each

other as the exaggerated extremes of their respective worlds interrelate. Also, the verbal morality statute never lives up to its Big Brother potential. Besides being expected to laugh at the regulation of profanity, we are also expected to laugh at rejecting the statute, when Spartan needs "toilet paper." While this is perhaps fine on a visceral level once, its repetition does little to advance the idea that speech is constantly monitored and forced to conform to predetermined standards.

Indeed the whole issue of monitoring is barely touched. Despite Spartan's initial contempt for the monitoring implants, he never again questions the tracking devices or the more pronounced presence of computer and camera monitoring. He is annoyed by the social rebuffs that attempt to constrain his behavior, but he views this more as an interpersonal problem than a societal obstruction. Perhaps his comfort level reflects more on our society, two years removed from his 1996, than any Big Brother paranoia

we might want to impose on him. All the monitoring technology that exists in 2032 essentially exists today, especially when one considers the implications of the ankle bracelet monitoring device worn by criminals under house arrest.

Chemical control, as well as brainwashing, have the biggest impact on the story, as they are key to the rehabilitation of cryo-prisoners. Behaviors are changed; ideas deemed socially positive are reinforced; and non-destructive skills, talents, and knowledge are taught during a typical cryo-sentence. Spartan was taught how to knit and, if his sentence had been completed, he allegedly would have been deprogrammed for violence. On the other hand, Phoenix, in an abuse of the system, had his violent tendencies and skills reinforced, so that could more effectively eliminate Edgar Friendly for Governor Cocteau.

Regardless of its underdeveloped treatment here, monitoring and control of individuality and independent thought is an essential "utopia as dystopia" convention. Chemical control occurs in *THX-1138* and *BRAVE NEW WORLD*. Brainwashing takes place in 1984, *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE*, *BRAZIL*, *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* and *FORTRESS*. TV monitors, view screens, and computers keep a watchful eye on society in 1984, *BRAZIL*, *FORTRESS*, and *THX-1138*. Tracking devices and implants are seen in *FORTRESS*, *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK*, and *THX-1138*. And individuals or robots monitor other citizens in *LOGAN'S RUN*, *METROPOLIS*, *THX-1138*, *BRAZIL*, 1984 and *FAHRENHEIT 451*.

*DEMOLITION MAN* incorporates every one of these components, again evidencing its ready appropriation of ideas. Yet Spartan's "noble" predilection for violence doesn't seem as poignant as the Time Traveler's sadness over the Eloi's loss of knowledge in *THE TIME MACHINE* or even Lowell's compassion for nature in the somewhat hokey *SILENT*





In 1984, society also pretends to watch out for the well being of citizens, such as Winston Smith (John Hurt), but the dystopic elements are more obvious.

RUNNING. As a side effect of fighting Phoenix, Spartan finds himself fighting to save San Angeles' citizens not only from Phoenix but also from themselves. It is ultimately ironic, by movies end, to realize that freedom of independent thought is won physically, not mentally.

Another of the "utopia as dystopia" conventions is the pre-story catastrophe or war. In DEMOLITION MAN, the San Angeles area suffers a huge earthquake before the metropolis merges in 2011, combin-

ing Los Angeles, San Diego, and Santa Barbara. While not strong enough to detach California from the coastline, we are given the impression that the damage was extensive, as demonstrated by the subterranean street on view at the museum. This destructive event serves as the catalyst for the development or construction of the pseudo-utopic society. Cocteau may already have had many of his changes in place or initiated, but the earthquake, we can presume, tight-

ened his grip, further allowing him to embrace the role of savior and social messiah.

The whole basis for SILENT RUNNING and the presence of forest pods relies on the fact that a pre-story war devastated most of Earth's forest and vegetation. World War III and the rise of criminal violence in America leads to the abandonment and use of Manhattan Island as the sole maximum security prison for the entire country in ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK. We can only guess what drove Logan's people to live in domed cities in LOGAN'S RUN, but it is a safe assumption that some disaster or war caused them to seek protection from the outside world. So complete is this isolation that everyone except for

the computer believes the city is the entire world, with no other world existing beyond it.

THX-1138 presents a world in which humanity appears condemned to shuffle through life with ant-like rotteness beneath a supposedly uninhabitable surface. As with LOGAN'S RUN, it is not clear what drove people below ground, but THX-1138, like Logan, shows the futility of this existence when he exits the underground tunnel and beholds the blazing rays of the sun. In George Pal's film THE TIME MACHINE, it is nuclear war (not H.G. Well's industrial revolution nightmare of a fully realized dichotomy between privileged society and underworker) that leads to the evolutionary split between the Eloi and Morlocks.

Both 1984 and THE HANDMAID'S TALE present a variation on the catastrophe/war theme by continuing the war prominently into the main plot. Actually, the reality of the war in 1984 is open for debate; nonetheless, it influences the course of society and the lives of its citizens. Winston Smith yearns for corruption in an overly pure world, the virtue of which is fought for daily on big screen monitors detailing battles and, thus, social gains and losses. It matters little whether the enemy is Eurasia one day or the newly coined East Asia the next. It is simply enough that the purity of society, overseen by the allegedly benevolent Big Brother, appears to be defended.

In THE HANDMAID'S TALE, America becomes the Republic of Gilead as the result of a coup led by Christian fundamentalists. Resistance spills over into the story of Offred, as rebels battle the Commander, one of Gilead's founding fathers. He, too, appears benevolent, but his benign behavior towards Offred veils and eventually reveals his less than puritanical behavior.

## UTOPIA VS. DYSTOPIA

**Utopian futures are always interwoven with dystopic qualities. These future societies, no matter how seemingly perfect, always hide sterility, stagnation, and conformity.**

## POLITICALLY CORRECT?

DEMOLITION MAN claims to portray the dangers of a futuristic society that is "too politically correct." Is it politically correct at all, or is it rather a vision of right-wing paranoia?

The phrase itself was created by conservatives as a pejorative for a so-called movement alleged to be squelching free speech in order to promote multiculturalism, ethnic diversity, and minority rights at the expense of traditional values. The ill-defined term seems to imply a form of pernicious oppression, a sort of reverse racism, directed at affluent white males. Therefore, a homogenized future, wherein multiculturalism has been abandoned, cannot be considered part of any "politically correct" agenda, real or imagined; instead, it sounds like the wish fulfillment of those who coined the phrase



Snipes' Phoenix kicks some p.c. ass.

precisely because they feel threatened by ethnic diversity.

But this is not the film's worst failing. Far more pernicious is the implication, in director Marco Brambilla's words, that a "balance" must "be struck between the violent extreme represented by the era that the Spartan character comes from [and] the overly politically correct extreme of the future..." Excuse me, but is

he implying that a peaceful future necessarily needs a little violence in order to strike the proper "balance"? That film certainly seems to imply as much.

In the low point, Brambilla bungles the reaction shots of the San Angeles police as they see one of their comrades dying on surveillance cameras. Their stricken expressions derive chuckles rather than sympathy from the audience, who think, 'What wimps!' In fact, viewers are actually forced into a perspective of enjoying Phoenix's violent rampages, which appear to give a much needed kick in the ass to the complacent and apathetic society. Many films try to use violence to express an anti-violence message; this is one of the few which seems determinedly pro-violence.

**Steve Biodrowski**



His willingness to step outside the moral boundaries he helped establish reveals him to be a hypocrite—a would-be social benefactor who hides behind his own double-standard.

Here again, DEMOLITION MAN intersects with established conventions. Cocteau is not the perfect benefactor most San Angelians believe him to be. Though not as dark as Big Brother, his moral ambiguity has greater consequences for society than the Commander's. While complicit in the underworld nightclub to which he takes Offred, the Commander largely shields his private from his public life, only allowing his indiscretions to affect those nearest to him. Cocteau's more blatant indiscretions have irreversible social consequences, as the unleashing of Phoenix and, subsequently, Spartan proves.

Cocteau, in his desire to control society and eliminate Edgar Friendly's Wasteland inhabitants, steps outside his own social parameters. But unlike Fredersen in METROPOLIS, Cocteau has no chance of redemption in the end. Fredersen also hopes to eliminate potential problems with the workers who live beneath Metropolis by using a foreign entity, in this case a lifelike female robot. As with Phoenix, the robot escapes his control, and its actions almost lead to the destruction of the entire city. But where Cocteau is slain for his transgressions, Fredersen survives and, through the mediation of his son Freder, has the opportunity, albeit grudgingly, to correct and reform his mistakes. In DEMOLITION MAN, reconciliation lies with Spartan, whose presence and influence, we are to believe, will lead to a merging of San Angeles and Wasteland societies.

It is here that we find the final "utopia as dystopia" convention. In several of the films examined so far, society is usually divided into two groups, the privileged and the workers. In THE HANDMAID'S TALE, the rich control society, enslaving

fertile women to procreate. In LOGAN'S RUN, the Cubs are isolated in their own quadrant until they can be reabsorbed into mainstream society. In both 1984 and BRAZIL, workers such as Smith and Lowry are subject to the control of the hidden elite, whose most significant interaction with them takes place during the torture of each character. METROPOLIS focuses on this division, delineating a split between a chosen elite and a large working class that operate the city-sustaining machines.

It is again with THE TIME MACHINE (novel more than film) that DEMOLITION MAN shares its most common ground. The complacency, social standardization, and intellectual stagnation of the San Angelians foreshadow the future world of the Eloi. They are sim-

ple and naive, possessing little or none of the creative energy and passion that Spartan and the Time Traveler believe propel humanity forward. Rather, the people of San Angeles exist to be happy, feel good, and live safely. As a result, they are grounding themselves in intellectual decay and social paralysis, a situation that blatantly portends the Eloi's fate.

For example, just as the Eloi have developed little regard for their fellows, except in play and sex, so too have the San Angelians. In an oft repeated theme, such as the incubation tanks and nurseries of BRAVE NEW WORLD and LOGAN'S RUN, or the elimination of human contact, as in THX-1138 and 1984, the San Angelians have dehumanized sex and procreation. They still care about each other, but

have eliminated physical interaction to the point of not even touching hands when they give "high-fives."

Standing in contrast to the San Angelians are Edgar Friendly and the inhabitants of Wasteland. The parallels to a Morlock-like existence are obvious in their underground lifestyle, scavenging for food, clothes and other necessities, and the attacks on the surface dwellers (for food and social resistance). Their descent into Morlockdom is just as nascent but no less inevitable. Unlike the Morlocks, however, they still have intelligence, and it is their very fight for freedom that has led to their ostracization from the world above. It is only with Spartan and Phoenix's arrival, a la the Time Traveler, that ei-

Inset: In DEMOLITION MAN, Ed Friendly's underground dwellers seem like antecedents of the troglodyte Morlocks in H.G. Wells' THE TIME MACHINE. This thematic material is pushed into the background, however, to make room for the physical confrontation between Stallone and Snipes (above).



ther group seemingly avoids a similar, Wellsian fate.

Ultimately, DEMOLITION MAN is as much about the physical battle between Spartan and Phoenix as the philosophical confrontation between Spartan and Cocteau. Though the "utopia as dystopia" motif is a powerful thematic device, DEMOLITION MAN never does more than borrow the conventions of its predecessors. No old ideas are reexamined or extrapolated, and no new ideas are put forth. What DEMOLITION MAN provides is an adequately stylish packaging of "utopia as dystopia" effects, set within the action star matchup of Stallone and Snipes. Any potential the film had is relegated to the background and setting, hidden amidst the myriad of explosions and flying bullets.



# CYBORG 2

**Stealth sequel sneaks onto video shelves.**

*By Steve Biodrowski*

By now, if you keep up on this kind of thing, you might have heard or read about the completion of production on CYBORG 3, starring Zach Galligan, Richard Lynch, and Malcolm McDowell. If you're mathematically minded, you're might even be wondering, "Was there ever a CYBORG 2, or is this a case like the Traveling Wilburies, who skipped number 2 and simply titled their second album Part 3?"

The now *de rigueur* TERMINATOR-style metal cyborg skeleton was nicely handled by KNB FX.



The answer to your questions would be, respectively, yes and no. There is a CYBORG 2 (directed, in fact, by the same man who went on to helm Part 3), but it got scant attention during production, when it was titled GLASS SHADOWS, after which it was surreptitiously shipped off to video.

The film is yet another in the seemingly endless line of Trimark sequels to films they did not originally produce. The list includes, as of last count, RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD III, WARLOCK: THE ARMAGEDDON, and THE PHILADELPHIA EXPERIMENT II. CYBORG 2 is an exception among the list, in that this above-average piece of low-budget filmmaking actually exceeds the original. But that should come as little surprise to those who have seen the previous genre films of director and co-writer Michael Schroeder. After all, he managed to redeem the slasher formula in OUT OF THE DARK, and even the low-brow MORTUARY ACADEMY was at least funny.

In this case, he was given the unenviable task of making a sequel to a film that was not very well received in the first place. Fortunately, Trimark prefers to avoid direct continuity in their sequels (even when, as in the case of LEPRECHAUN 1 and 2, they did initiate the franchise). This allowed Schroeder the opportunity to fashion a largely original work; in fact, during production, the press releases gave nary a hint that this was a sequel to anything at all.

Schroeder inherited the script, about a cyborg named Cash (Angelina Jolie), who realizes her makers have created her to be a tool of assassination and escapes with the help of her human martial arts instructor, Colt (Elias Koteas), with whom she has fallen in love. "I liked the whole idea of the [Pinwheel] company trying to play God and trying to create people," re-



In the opening scene, the image of Casella "Cash" Reese (Angelina Jolie) is displayed on the monitors in the boardroom of Pinwheel Robotics Corporation.

calls Schroeder. "I liked the idea that love is stronger than man or machine."

Still, the director had a hand in reshaping the material. "It had some nice scenes, but it was very technical, very impersonal. It read like a repair manual for a VCR; it also read like a \$40-million film. We knew we didn't have that kind of budget. The one thing I knew we did have was a good story, and I thought that, if we enhanced the relationship between Colt and Cash and told that story instead of trying to do an effects film, we'd come out with a pretty nice picture. So we do have some effects and stunts, but they were hand-picked, not wall-to-wall. I think I had a lot to do with sharpening the dramatic story, combining some characters and creating some new ones, writing a lot of the relationship scenes, and taking out very expensive effects scenes in order to propel the story along."

When working at this level of filmmaking, explains Schroeder, trying to overcome script deficiencies is more the rule than the exception. "This was my fifth feature in six years as director, and every one was kind of marginal at the screenplay level, at best. We tried to beef that up, and when you saw the movies, they were definitely better than the screenplays. This is my best script so far, and obviously working on the rewrite myself helped me 'see' the picture when it came time to direct.

Trimark kept out of the development process except for offering a few sugges-





The dialogue helped to clarify the film's original and somewhat obscure title, GLASS SHADOWS. The phrase refers to a liquid explosive injected into the unfortunate android, who was then (without her knowledge) to be used as a walking, sentient bomb to destroy the rival Kobayashi Robotics company.

tions. Once the script was ready, Schroeder was able to land veteran actor Jack Palance, fresh from his Academy Award, in the rather unusual role of Mercy, a human being who has been rebuilt as a cyborg. Sympathetic to man-made cyborgs attempting to escape their creators, Mercy has infiltrated the Pinwheel security systems, appearing on monitors to offer helpful suggestions to Cash and Colt regarding their escape. "There are a lot of video effects with Mercy the Mouth," Schroeder jokes. "Through 80% of the picture, what you see of him is just his lips or his eyes on the TV screen, and we shot those all in one day. I took that video and solarized it to make it mysterious looking."

Making an impressive debut was Jolie, though she did present one potential problem to her director. The non-union picture had to shoot around the clock in order to keep on schedule, but child labor laws would have kept the underage actress from working more than a regular shift. "She's a real talent," Schroeder enthuses. "It's her first movie, but I read probably fifty actresses and model types, and it was really difficult to find somebody who had the

cyborg quality but still has some kind of presence, and when this girl came in, I knew she had what it takes. Then I found out she's only seventeen, and we can't mess around with labor laws and welfare workers and school teachers. I just didn't have that luxury; I had to shoot, shoot, shoot. She had just finished high school; she had done her junior and senior year in five months—I wish I could have done that! Then I found out later that her father is Jon Voight, so the acting's definitely in her genes. He knew a judge and made some calls, and we got her emancipated,

Sneaking into the Pinwheel laboratory at night, Cash is about to make some rather unpleasant discoveries, which will reveal what her creators have in store for her.



**“We didn’t have a big budget, but we had a good story. We knew if we emphasized that, we’d come out with a pretty nice picture.”**

**—Director Michael Schroeder—**

because she had been living on her own for quite awhile. She just needed to file and get a judge to agree to it, so then we could just work, and we didn't have to give her special treatment. And she's a tough girl; she hangs in there until the last shot of the day. She was the most mature seventeen year old I've ever met."

"I was very surprised," Jolie admits of landing the lead in a post-apocalyptic martial arts love story. "I have a very aggressive side to me, but I never considered myself for this type of action film. I knew I could do it, but it shocked me that other people believed it as well. I've always been thin and very petite, so I had to work out really hard."

Before auditioning, Jolie had only recently begun taking kickboxing lessons. "That's why they set me up for the film, so once I started I was glad I had gotten into it. I couldn't have hoped for a better first film, because it involved special effects and getting very physical, learning martial arts and shooting a gun, so it kept me busy. I like drama because I have a theatre background, but I guessed this set would be very focused. It's nice to have everybody real happy on set, real loose, so you can enjoy it."

One of the highlights is the catfight between Cash and a rival corporation's cyborg assassin, played by Karen Shepherd.

"I think it's fun to see two women fighting," says Jolie. "She's a real fighter; she's been trained, and she did the Conan fight for Universal studios. She knows so much it's easy to work with her. She could be careful with me. If I stepped too far or too close, she was ready to move back; it's not like two amateurs. Over the weekend we called each other and worked together with the stunt coordinator."

The actress was intrigued by her part "because she has to seize the world. She's almost child-like and naive. She experiences almost all of her emotions for the first time



# CYBORG 2

## REVIEW

*"In-name-only" sequel exceeds original.*

### CYBORG 2

Vidmark Entertainment Home Video presents an Anglo-American Films International Production. Produced by Raju Patel and Alain Silver. Directed by Michael Schroeder. Written by Ron Yanover & Mark Gaskin and Schroeder. Special Makeup Effects by Robert Kurtzman, Greg Nootero, Howard Berger. 90 minutes. Rated R.

Cassella "Cash" Reese.....Angelina Jolie  
Colton "Colt" Ricks.....Elias Koteas  
Mercy.....Jack Palance  
Martin Dunn.....Allen Garfield  
Ray Chen.....Karen Shepherd  
Denny Bench.....Billy Drago

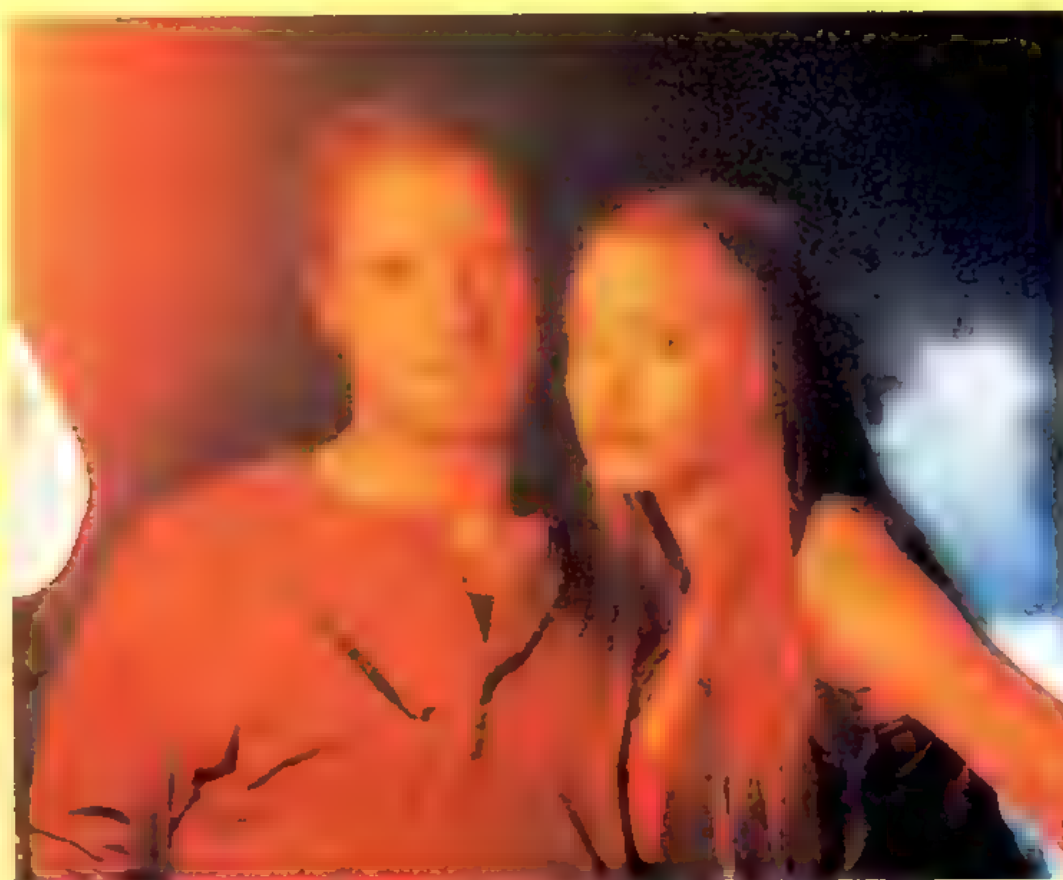
by John Thonen

Sequels "in name only" have become a pretty common item in the direct-to-video arena. From the marginally related WITCHCRAFT series to the totally unrelated CURSE films, most of these efforts have been pretty awful. If only by virtue of comparison to this undisistinguished lot, CYBORG 2 ain't half bad.

The film has a clear advantage over most DTV sequels, in that it would be hard to make a worse film than CYBORG. That singularly dim-witted excursion into sadism and non-acting is memorable only as the film that finally convinced most of us that director Albert Pyun's seeming promise in SWORD AND THE SORCERER was definitely just a fluke.

Originally somewhat cryptically titled GLASS SHADOWS, CYBORG 2 is only marginally a sequel. The original took place in a ROAD WARRIOR-ish future wasteland; #2 transpires in a highly industrialized metropolis obviously inspired by BLADERUNNER. The only real connection comes from some flashback footage from the Jean Claude Van Damme starrer and the central idea of a female cyborg accompanied by a male human on a quest for survival and discovery.

Whereas the original was cast with martial artists, models, and stuntmen, director Michael Schroeder has populated his film almost exclusively with actual actors—and damn fine ones at that. As good as stars Angelina Jolie and Elias Koteas are, it is Academy Award-winner Jack Palance who cements the story's disparate elements together in his small but piv-



Angelina Jolie, in her debut, and Elias Koteas, from TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES, give performances which help elevate CYBORG 2 above most DTV.

otal role.

Artificial beauty Cassella Reese (Jolie) has been injected with a liquid explosive to become the ultimate assassin in the industrial warfare between her creators, the Pinwheel Corporation, and their chief competitors. Her martial arts trainer Colton Ricks (Koteas) has fallen in love with her, and the two attempt to escape. The remainder of the film is a chase as the duo attempt to outwit their pursuers. Their only ally is Mercy (Palance) a former war hero who now leads a misfit resistance movement. Palance appears on screen for only a little over a minute, but his character is effectively interspersed throughout, through largely disembodied appearances on various TVs and monitors glimpsed within the movie.

Makeup effects are nicely handled by the always reliable KNB, and the industrially ravaged future landscape is nicely realized by brief but effective miniatures. However, the film's real strength lies in its cast.

Jolie is a major find. She is at once a breath-taking beauty, a capable actress, and a convincing action performer in her martial arts

scenes. Koteas (best known as Casey Jones in the TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES) is also effective. His amazing resemblance to Robert DeNiro, both vocally and facially, will probably keep him from ever achieving stardom, but he has the talent. Karen Shepherd, a real-life martial arts champion previously limited to supporting roles in cheap action films, acquits herself nicely as Raven, one of the duo of bounty hunters employed to retrieve the runaway cyborg. Perennial villain Billy Drago chews the scenery unmercifully as a vain, plastic surgery-obsessed killer, but the most fun comes from Palance.

Who knows what he was thinking when he followed up his Oscar statuette with this [Editorial comment: Don't ask!], but he has a good time chortling through one-liners and philosophical drivel as a kind of electronic Greek chorus to the proceedings. CYBORG 2 is no classic, but it's better than its predecessor and better than most sequels. Everyone involved was intent on making an entertaining film; and, sad to say, that's a goal to which far too few genre films aspire these days. □

like love and hate and fear, and it's all very new to her. I also liked that she has strength, but she's not invincible—she has weakness. I was happy when I read the script, and then I saw the casting—it's a great group of characters."

Jolie was also concerned about displaying the slightly inhuman quality of a character who hadn't lived long enough to develop many personal idiosyncrasies. "She is very direct and to-the-point; she doesn't have a lot of little quirks. For her expressions, I studied different things like animals. I have an iguana at home—they are very slow and very alert."

Planned for a theatrical release, the film was shot in an anamorphic widescreen format; unfortunately, when Trimark instead opted to hand the finished film over to their direct-to-video division, Vidmark, this extra effort went to waste. "When you're shooting anamorphic, the lighting is much more involved," explains the director. "I like to move the camera—keep the visuals flowing—and that takes time. I've got a certain style, and I don't like to compromise. I don't like to just go from master shot to medium shot to close-up and then save it in the editing. It just doesn't work for me. I count on my vision to be correct, and we shoot it one certain way and with certain movements. If I feel I might be in trouble—the move might be too long—I will shoot a cut-away or two. But I pretty much bank on the shot list that I put together for the sequence."

According to Schroeder, "The biggest challenge is just to get someone to back you and give you the autonomy to make your movie and not to get locked into the committee. There's so many different opinions. They say that a camel is a horse designed by committee, and I really believe that. On the other hand, they say that 'art is the sum of one man's madness,' and that's why I never do TV, commercials, or rock videos. I don't like account directors telling me where to put the camera. I'd rather not work than have that, so I stay in features, which is

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# CYBORG 2

## JACK PALANCE

*The Oscar-winning actor on his science fiction cameo.*

By Steve Biodrowski

October 1992, Terminal Island, off of San Pedro, California. This is the location of GLASS SHADOWS (later retitled CYBORG 2), and I am about to interview Jack Palance. Recalling his exuberant Oscar acceptance speech, I'm anticipating an animated conversation; a few easy questions should be all it takes to start him talking about this film. After all, he must be deluged with offers since winning the award, so he must have had good reason to select this as his next project.

As the unit publicist and I sit in the star's trailer, the interview begins with a simple question about the role he's playing, a cyborg.

"I don't know what the hell a cyborg is," he remarks.

Not the most auspicious beginning. I try to define the term, but all I get is a blank expression. Try another tack: "What about the script appealed to you?"

He waits a beat, then says matter-of-factly, "The script did." He leans forward, a smile playing across those craggy features, as I wait for some kind of elaboration. Finally, he lets me off the hook by saying, "What am I going to say? Of course it did, and I think it's very good."

"But what made you want to do it? The character? The story? The director?"

Trying to help me out, the unit publicist offers, "All of the above?"

"All those things," he allows. "Plus, a company with money—that's always an extra inducement."

Long pause. Again, he



Although Palance stars as Mercy, a human being who has been rebuilt as a cyborg, the actor steadfastly claims, "I don't know what the hell a cyborg is!"

stares at me with that smile. Suddenly I'm reminded of SHANE, and I start to get the impression he's trying to goad me into reaching for my gun, so that he can shoot me down and then claim self-defense.

Oh well, see what happens with another question. "What's it like working with Michael Schroeder?"

"It's like making a film."

End of comment. I wait politely, nervously, expecting more. Not about to oblige me, he chuckles to himself, apparently enjoying my discomfort.

His answers are so brief and so fast they don't give time to formulate new questions. These few minutes are starting to seem like eternity. I feel like the character in the story by Jorge Luis Borges, who finds himself miraculously frozen in time while facing a firing squad. The difference is that he used that suspended moment to complete his masterpiece, an epic poem, in his own mind. All I'm doing is drawing a tremendous blank.

I'm trying to figure out a

graceful way of giving up and excusing myself when rescue apparently arrives in the form of a knock on the door—the makeup crew is ready for Palance. Breathing a sigh of relief, I expect him to send us on our way with apologies about getting back to work; instead, he says to the grip, "That'll only take a couple of minutes, and we've just started this interview."

The grip withdraws, then returns momentarily, not to demand the actor's presence in makeup but to give him a pack of cigarettes. While Palance lights up, I ponder methods of jump starting this conversation. Sensing that I'm drowning, the unit publicist speaks up: "We understand that throughout most of the film, we see just shots of your mouth and eyes."

"You just see me like this," he says, framing his eyes with his hands. "Then I put in an appearance at the end. I come out singing that song 'All of Me...why not see all of me?' Then somebody shoots me

and says, 'You're a lousy singer!'"

We all laugh, and those precious seconds allow me to think up something else to ask. "Why are you off-screen so much? Are you supposed to be a mysterious character?"

"You would gather that, wouldn't you?" Again, he smiles and stares, the effect this time enhanced with billowing cigarette smoke.

By this time, I realize that, despite the press release hype, Palance is playing only a cameo, which is why he has so little to say about his work on the film—he hasn't done much. Shifting gears, I ask what he'll be doing tonight. With effects people rigging explosions and stunt people preparing for battle, it looks as if Palance's character will be getting out from behind the television monitor and into some heavy-duty action.

"I don't know; I think there's a lot of shooting," he replies. "I come in spraying bullets and save [Cash and Colt]'s lives. I give up my life so the lovers can continue." Laughing, he adds, "That's such a lie. They say, 'Save the girl for him.' If you had a gun, you'd turn around and shoot him and keep the girl for yourself!"

"So you're sort of the one-man posse?"

"Yeah, I'm the hero. I'm Rambo; I'm a short Rambo."

This sounds promising. Before CITY SLICKERS, Palance was best known for his villains, especially his Oscar-nominated role in SHANE. It occurs to me to ask if playing heroes is an enjoyable change of pace.

Long pause. "What the hell difference does it make?"

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## Giving up the Spirit

### THE HOUSE OF THE SPIRITS

A Miramax Release. Written and Directed by Bille August. Based on the novel by Isabel Allende. Produced by Bernd Eichinger. Director of Photography, Jorgen Persson. Music composed by Hans Zimmer. Esteban Trueba... Jeremy Irons  
Clara... Meryl Streep  
Férula... Glenn Close  
Blanca... Winona Ryder  
Pedro... Antonio Banderas

### LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE

A Miramax Release. Directed and produced by Alfonso Arau. Written by Laura Esquivel, based on her novel. Cinematographers, Emmanuel Lubezki, Steve Bernstein. Music composed by Leo Brower. Tita... Lumi Cavazos  
Pedro... Marco Leonardi  
Mama Elena... Regina Torne  
Nacha... Ada Carrasco  
John Brown... Mario Ivan Martinez

by Anthony Montesano

Two recent art house offerings, *LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE* (a Mexican import) and *THE HOUSE OF THE SPIRITS*, are actually forays into *cinéfantastique*, based on books which blend bittersweet family histories with supernatural elements—each no doubt owing a debt to Gabriel García Márquez's landmark novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. On the surface, the films seem remarkably similar: both have, at their center, a woman with paranormal powers. *CHOCOLATE*'s Tita has an uncanny knack for cooking up magic potions, while *SPIRITS*' Clara is a clairvoyant; both films sport the appearances of two ghosts; and both take place south of the border (*CHOCOLATE* in Mexico, *SPIRITS* in Peru). Where they differ however is in approach.

*CHOCOLATE* is a love story as much as anything else. Tita, the last born of her family, is denied the hope of getting married, because of a family tradition which destines her to care for her Mama Elena until she dies. Tita's true love, Pedro, marries her older sister so he can at least live in the same house as his beloved. Sensing something fishy, Mama Elena does everything she can to keep the lovers apart. Meanwhile, Tita finds comfort in the kitchen, where the family cook, Nacha, teaches her the secret ingredient to magic food: "Cook it with much love." Soon, Tita discovers her meals can affect those around her, inspiring fits of love-making or bouts of illness. Her mother's death does not free her from the grip of matriarchal domination, as Mama Elena's ghost returns to damn Tita for her involvement with Pedro. The loving spirit of



Marco Leonardi and Lumi Cavazos bring a wonderfully authentic and romantic flavor to *CHOCOLATE*.

Nacha, however, also returns to offer comfort.

*SPIRITS* concerns itself with the marriage of Esteban and Clara. Originally betrothed to Clara's older sister, Esteban settles for Clara after Rosa accidentally dies from poisoned wine meant for her politician father (a death Clara predicted). Eventually, the animalistically driven Esteban settles into married life with Clara and his long-suffering sister Férula. Clara is the only person to ever show Férula any kindness, and soon Esteban becomes jealous, driving his sister from his house. Clara foresees the death of her parents, predicts the sex of her unborn child, and eventually returns as a ghost to comfort her daughter, Blanca, in a time of need.

*SPIRITS*, however, is a fantasy film in denial—or perhaps one with an identity crisis. The successful *CHOCOLATE*—adapted in its na-

tive tongue by the novel's author, Laura Esquivel—embraces the mystical elements of its source. The Anglo-sized, stripped-down film version of Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*, however, is mostly demystified and severely truncated by writer-director Bille August. The few remaining supernatural elements, as a result, seem oddly incongruous to the rest of the film.

August was quoted in an interview as saying that "supernatural effects in a movie can look ridiculous." Then why take on a project with a host of supernatural elements? *SPIRITS* does have plenty going for it: an incredible cast, meticulous production values, and convincing locales. What's missing, however, is at the very heart of the book on which it is based. In forsaking those mystical elements—which it does almost completely—the film denies itself the opportunity to visualize the rich supernatural texture its source provides and, thus, leaves its audience emotionally cold.

*CHOCOLATE* does not make that mistake. From the magic of the kitchen, to the power of true love, to the presence of ghosts, the film tells its story with an unabashed faith in its subject matter—the magical nature common to all family storytelling. From the very start, *CHOCOLATE* is wrapped in a warm golden hue. Told in flashback by the main character's great niece, the film is of a personal nature. Ironically, even though *SPIRITS* adopts a similar framing device, the result is much more distancing. *SPIRITS* strips itself not only of its mysticism but also, by its ultra-white cast, of its ethnicity, the very ethnicity—with folklore intact—which makes *CHOCOLATE* so rich. □

Mina Harker meets Armand—or, that is, Ryder and Banderas in *HOUSE*.



### FILM RATINGS

- Catch it opening night
- Worth seeing first run
- Wait for second-run
- Wait for video/cable
- Fodder for MST-3K

### WICKED CITY

Director: Yoshiaki Kawajiri. Writer: Kisel Choo. Streamline Pictures, 90 mins. Unrated. With: Snegoff, Mike Reynolds, Gaye Kruger.

This ain't Disney. It's Cornell Woolrich gone mad, a nightmarish film noir that, as an introduction to Japanese animation, can be as jolting as *PSYCHO* and *STAR WARS* were in their respective genres. The film is so stylized, and the voice characterizations so adept, that it seems animation could have been abandoned in favor of live action—that is, until a beautiful woman sprouts nasty spider-like appendages, and a part of her anatomy turns into a tooth-filled orifice that would make Lorrena Bobbitt look like a girl scout. This erotic thriller posits a parallel "Black World" which has embraced a tentative peace treaty with Earth. When a renegade faction of shape changers attempt to destroy the accord, special agent Taki Renzaburo joins forces with Makia, a female counterpart from the other world, to guard the security of a secret conference to renew the treaty. Twists and surprises punctuate the sex, blood, and battles that fill the story, making this a totally engrossing film.

●●● Dan Scappertotti

### THUMBELINA

Director and writer: Don Bluth. Warner Brothers. PG. With: Carol Channing, Gilbert Gottfried, John Hurt, Chae.

After seeming to hit his stride with *THE LAND BEFORE TIME*, Don Bluth has been sliding backward, searching for the right formula instead of simply trying to make good contemporary movies using animation. In his latest effort, he takes a cue from Disney by making a musical out of a classic fairy tale. As if to strengthen the parallels, he also opts for a female protagonist, along the lines of Ariel and Belle; unfortunately, Thumbelina is not of their caliber. Bured somewhere deep in the story is the murky notion that she somehow deserves her ill fortune, because on two occasions the villains (a forgettable lot, often working at cross purposes) tempt her with bright lights and fame when we all know she should just stay home. This unwanted echo of *ROCK-A-DOODLE* doesn't even work on its own terms, subverted by a script which never has Thumbelina making a clear moral choice; instead, she is pushed around by events, while a handsome young fairy prince pops in and out of the narrative, vowing (heavy dramatic reverb effect) "I WILL FIND HER!" Someone should tell Bluth that, in *THE LITTLE MERMAID*, Ariel's choices, even when wrong (e.g., signing a pact with Ursula), were her own, and she was driving the plot forward, not following the lead of other characters. On the plus side, the animation is excellent, and one of Barry Manilow's songs ("Marry the Mole," delivered by Carol Channing) is mildly amusing.

● Steve Blodrowski



## A mature modern approach toward classic mythology.

### SIRENS

A Miramax Release. Written and directed by John Duigan. Produced by Sue Milken. Director of Photography, Geoff Burton. Music composed by Rachel Portman.

Anthony Campion...	Hugh Grant
Estella Campion...	Tara Fitzgerald
Norman Lindsay...	Sam Neill
Sheela...	Elle MacPherson
Giddy...	Portia De Rossi
Rose Lindsay...	Pamela Rabe
Pru...	Kate Fischer

by Anthony P. Montesano

In Greek mythology, sirens are sea nymphs whose song lures all who hear it to their death. In his latest film, writer-director John Duigan (*WIDE SARGASSO SEA*) explores a modern interpretation of the myth as the sirens (led by MacPherson) appear on land, modeling for a secluded, eccentric painter (Neill) preoccupied with erotic subject matter. The artist, his wife, their children, and these three sirens live in an Eden-like environment. Into this paradise comes a sexually repressed minister (played with great charm by Hugh Grant of *FOUR WEDDINGS & A FUNERAL*) and his wife Estella (Fitzgerald), sent by the Church of England to persuade

the artist to remove his controversial painting *The Crucifixion of Venus* from an upcoming exhibit.

What is supposed to be a day's stay is mysteriously extended as one mishap after another prevents the couple from returning home. Upon their stay, they are immediately transfixed by the ethereal, trance-inducing influences of the sexually free sirens. The women swim and pose in the nude, satisfying each other with loving kisses and full body massages.

Rather than being drawn to their deaths by these creatures, the minister and his wife are instead reborn to a sexual awakening that ultimately revitalizes their failing relationship. (In one particularly telling scene, early on, the minister—in the missionary position, of course—mounts his clearly unaroused wife. As the bed sweats with each thrust, he apologizes for the noise as he hurries to finish.) On a grander scale, one might imagine that the sexuality which flows purely from this haven changes not only the minister and his wife, but by extension the repression of the entire



Portia De Rossi, Elle MacPherson, and Kate Fischer as the titular SIRENS.

church. Issues of organized religion and its social relevance are skirted, but the film clearly lets its actions speak louder than its words.

The dream-like cinematography by Geoff Burton and the refreshingly uninhibited performances by MacPherson, De Rossi, and Fisher, captivate viewers, drawing them completely into this fantasy world. We knowingly smile as each siren matter-of-a-factly recounts how her father—a sailor, of course—died at sea. In fact, water imagery runs throughout the film, including recurring images of the *TITANIC* which seem to suggest that Estella herself may be a latent siren: snakes slink in and out of fountains where a

model boat floats into what appears to be a tiny iceberg; the sirens are forever bathing down by the river; and, in the film's climax, the minister's wife herself is drawn to the river by call of the sirens, who rise from the watery depths to baptize her in a sexual rebirth.

*SIRENS* is refreshing in the mature approach it takes toward classic mythology and the fantasy genre. Despite extensive nudity and numerous suggestive uses of food, nothing about the film ever seems exploitive. The subject matter is handled with grace, dignity, subtle sexy humor and a fiery creativeness seldom seen in genre films these days.

## King's *STAND* fails to deliver

### THE STAND

A Laurel Entertainment Release. Directed by Mick Garris. Written by Stephen King based on his novel. Produced by Mitchell Galin. Executive producers, Richard P. Rubinstein & Stephen King. Director of photography, Edward Pei. Production designer, Nelson Coates. Music composed by W.G. Snuffy Walden.

Stu	Gary Sinise
Frannie	Molly Ringwald
Randall Flagg	Jamie Sheridan
Nadine	Laura Sam Giacomo
Mother Abigail	Ruby Dee
Nick	Rob Lowe

by Steve Biedrowski

Believe it or not, I wanted to like this, partly to prove that *IM* does not automatically trash Stephen King but mostly because *The Stand* ranks among his best novels. Unfortunately, in spite of the author's presence as screenwriter and co-executive producer, this marks as one of the worst King adaptations yet.

This blandly photographed and badly directed TV filler is like an illustration of the old saying, "It's the singer, not the song." The film may tell the novel's story, but the telling of

that story is without any style whatsoever; there's no sign of the slightest ability when it comes to dramatizing what worked on the page in such a way as to make it visually interesting, rather than just an illustrated version of the incidents in the book.

Although the narrative and characters are mostly intact, the charac-

Gone are the glory days of Christopher Lee, replaced by a wimp villain who can barely say "boo" sans a morph.



terizations are not. King's many interior monologues illustrate the literary characters and make their actions understandable. Without an equivalent cinematic device for externalizing these motivations, the characters remain opaque and distant.

At the same time, scenes from the book are retained, even though they've often lost their point. For instance, Lloyd Henry's brief career as a hold-up man originally illustrated how he learned to deal with a dangerous partner, the lesson he needed to become Randall Flagg's right-hand man. In the film, we get the scene without context, without even the visceral impact King managed on the page. It's as if no one dared to say, "This scene needs a shot in the arm to make it worth keeping, or we should cut it out."

Not all crane shots in the world will ever make Mick Garris a good director; his pacing is lethargic, as if to convince his screenwriter he's not rushing past a single moment, in-

stead giving it the attention it presumably was thought to deserve.

Midway, Garris gives King, himself, and his wife employment in front of the camera. Viewers are suddenly (no, nothing in this is sudden) wondering why this blonde bit player is getting attention from the camera suited to a major character. So many characters pop out of nowhere (as if the epic running time were insufficient to handle the *dramatis personae*) that perhaps we're not supposed to notice.

King is equally to blame, showing little aptitude for adapting his own material. Chapter 17 of the novel, which introduces Flagg, is some of the finest, most powerful writing in the author's canon. What does he substitute for the tube? Flagg points his finger at a deer; a chintzy optical flashes; and the deer lies dead, while he utters the immortal line "Rub-a-dub-dub, thanks for the grub." Need I say more? I rest my case.



## NIGHT OF THE DEMONS 2

Director: Brian Trenchard-Smith. Writer: Joe Augustyn. Republic Pictures/Blue Rider Production. 95 mins. R. With: Christi Harris, Darin Keames, Bobby Jacoby, Merle Kennedy.

Despite a couple of gruesomely amusing moments (especially an irrelevant prologue, probably added at the last minute to compensate for all the boring exposition to follow), this is tired hackwork that, through diligent effort below and beneath the call of duty, almost manages to make the first NIGHT OF THE DEMONS look good. Particularly irritating is the amount of time taken to set up the premise and get the story rolling: you want to yell at the screen, "Hey, this is a sequel; the set up is already established! Why can't we just hit the ground running?" With dumb, horny teenagers being gored to death, this film feels much like a tired leftover from the dying splatter phase of the '70s and '80s. Let's forget aesthetics and quality for a second (the filmmakers certainly did), but is this stuff even commercial anymore? Apparently not: whereas Part One made a relative killing in regional release a few years ago, this received only a one-week platform release (on Friday, May 13) prior to video oblivion. Its appearance in theatres at all would have seemed like a depressing death-knell for the genre, had not THE CROW opened the same weekend.

● Steve Blodrowski

## THE FLINTSTONES

Director: Brian Levant. Writers: Tom S. Parker, Jim Jennewein & Steven E. de Souza. Universal and Amblin Entertainment. 92 mins. PG. With: John Goodman, Elizabeth Perkins, Rick Moranis, Rosie O'Donnell, Elizabeth Taylor.

Seven good reasons to see THE FLINTSTONES: (1) The B-52s, (2) Elizabeth Taylor, (3) The B-52s; (4) Harvey Corman's voice; (5) The B-52s; (6) Jonathan Winters' cameo; (7) by the way, did I mention The B-52s? One big reason not to see THE FLINTSTONES: in order to see 1 through 7, you have to sit through the rest of the movie

● Jay Stevenson

## SMOKING

Director: Alain Resnais. Writers: Jean-Pierre Bécir & Agnès Jaoui. October Films Release. 140 mins. With: Pierre Arditi, Sabine Azema.

This art house effort is arguably a genre film, in that it offers us, in a sense, a series of parallel worlds. More precisely, taking its cue from Jorge Luis Borges' "The Garden of Forking Paths," the film shows us a series of different realities, depending on which choices the characters make. In each case, the consequences are dramatized to their logical conclusion; then the story backtracks and explores what would have resulted if a different choice had been made. Director Resnais is an expert hand at this kind of thing (LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD), and he is aided by fine performances from Arditi and Azema, playing all the characters. Of course, each of their decisions leads to new choices, so the permutations could be infinite. This film limits itself to six outcomes; however, a companion piece, NO SMOKING, is on the way.

● ● ● Steve Blodrowski

## LASERBLAST

by Dennis Fischer

The original film version of LORD OF THE FLIES by Peter Brook (MARAT/SADE, THE MAHABHARATA) is the definitive adaptation of the late Willaim Golding's classic novel, a borderline piece of science fiction dealing, as it does, with boys stranded on a desert island during a future World War. The project is at once a classic tale of adventure and an anti-Libertarian tract on the dangers of abolishing all rules and the savagery that could result.

Once more, the people at Criterion have done an exemplary job of presenting a classic film on laserdisc. Although only the opening credits are letterboxed, at a 1:66 ratio, we're not missing much. The transfer, taken from the best elements available, looks terrific, despite the fact that a complete set of the original master elements no longer exists. As an additional bonus, the disc features a brief scene omitted from the original release, which establishes a closeness, as in the book, between Ralph (James Aubrey) and Jack (Tom Chapin) before they become adversaries.

Criterion discs are notable for the extra features they sometimes incorporate, and this disc is loaded with them. Unfortunately for people with early disc players that do not have digital sound, the soundtrack is available only on the digital track, the analog soundtracks having been reserved for a detailed discussion of behind-the-scenes reminiscences by director Brook, producer Lewis Allen, first-time cinematographer Tom Hollyman, and co-photographer-editor-associate producer Gerald Fell on one track and excerpts from Golding's reading of the novel on the other. Additionally, there are outtakes, home movies, behind-the-scenes photos, trailers for both this version and the 1990 remake, and excerpts from THE EMPTY SPACE, Gerald Fell's 1972 documentary showing Brook's methods for creating theater. Hence, though the film still runs 90 minutes, there are nearly 30 minutes of supplementary materials, not counting the analog soundtracks. Previously, the film was available only on a limited, hard-to-find low-budget videocassette label. With the Criterion re-

## TWO CLASSICS ON DISK: Remade but never surpassed.



Lon Chaney as Erik in the definitive 1925 version of PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

lease, it has received the respectful treatment it deserves.

The best laserdisc available of THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA is the two-disk set distributed by Image Entertainment, which includes both the 1925 original and the 1929 reissue. Though the original runs 114 minutes and the reissue runs only 77, the latter disk is the showpiece here, as the print includes the original tinting, a restored two-color Technicolor masked ball sequence, and a specially commissioned organ score by Gaylord Carter, not to mention such bonuses as the 1929 trailer, production stills, lobby cards, and the complete continuity shooting script. Also, this print is the clearest one extant.

The 1929 reissue added a few scenes along with a soundtrack which has been lost. None of the additional scenes, mostly musical filler, featured Chaney. The 1925 print is more complete but lacks the evocative tinting for the ball sequence or even musical accompaniment. The term silent film has always been something of a misnomer: once film passed the Nick-

elodeon stage, "silent" movies were always accompanied by music, from orchestras in the showplace theatres down to organs or pianos in smaller venues. They were never intended to be shown silently, and a comparison of the two versions gives a fairly clear idea as to why.

Viewing the film, it's easy to see why Lon Chaney's interpretation of the Phantom remains the definitive and defining one, especially compared to the lackluster film remakes (barring Brian De Palma's stylish rock opera variation, PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE). It is also easy to see why Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical version returned to the Chaney original for its imagery, which it superbly recreated on the stage.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA remains the best of the silent horror films, a spectacular epic with a gripping central performance on the part of Chaney as Erik, the horribly disfigured Phantom who devotes himself to the beauties of music and becomes the mentor to the unsuspecting ingenue Christine Daae. This story remains as timeless as ever. □



## DTV by John Thonen

## WELCOME TO THE KUNG FU-FUTURE A Science-fiction Martial Arts Hybrid.

Big-budget hits beget low-budget clones, but rules are made to be broken. The impetus behind the upcoming multi-million-dollar Jean Claude Van Damme action science fiction epic, *TIME COP*, may be the direct-to-video success of a mini-genre hybrid that I like to call Kung Fu-future films.

The Kung Fu-future arrived in 1989 with Albert Pyun's *CYBORG* (Cannon), starring Van Damme in an early role. Pyun established the seminal concepts of the category from the remains of the moribund Asian martial arts genre. Pyun changed little in terms of plot or character. Instead, he blended chop socky with the post-apocalyptic world of *MAD MAX*.

Pyun may well have recognized the similarity between Max and the heroes of Asian martial arts films. In many ways, Max could easily be a renegade Samurai or rogue Yakuza. Both Max and Van Damme's *CYBORG* character are loners, functioning outside society or even without society. They are, however, noble protectors of the downtrodden, fiercely loyal to their own rigid code of ethics. The Kung Fu-future field remained (despite *CYBORG*'s success) surprisingly barren for several years. A lone exception was 1990's *OMEGA COP* (Southgate).

In a move that has become de rigueur, *OMEGA COP*'s star was a real life karate champion, Ron Marchini. As the title implies, the film offers him as America's last cop, pitted against Mad Maxian hordes, in his quest to take three women across the post-apocalyptic wasteland to safety. As the film's producer, Marchini takes full blame for his own dismal star turn and for the hammy histrionics of cameo co-stars Adam West, Troy Donahue, and Stuart Whitman (looking like he's on a 48-hour pass from the detox-center). A sequel, recently released as *KARATE COP* (Imperial 1993), was mercifully unavailable to view for this article.

The success of *TERMINATOR 2* served notice to low-budget producers that the public was receptive to action-science-fiction combos. Pyun's *CYBORG* became the blueprint for a steady stream of Kung Fu-future films that shows no sign of ceasing.

Not surprisingly, the ever trend-



**CYBERTRACKER** is fairly typical of the Kung Fu-future hybrid, in that it casts a martial arts star (in this case, Don Wilson), rather than an actor, in the lead.

conscious Roger Corman was one of the first on the bandwagon. Corman tapped the star of his *BLOOD-FIST* series, Don "The Dragon" Wilson (the only man to win ten world martial arts championships), to play a cyborg enforcer helping an embarrassed-looking Meg Foster find the killer of her husband in *FUTUREKICK* (New Horizon 1993).

Never much of a risk-taker, Corman employed copious amounts of stock footage from the ubiquitous *BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS* as well as *CRIME ZONE* and even the *STRIPPED TO KILL* series. Inserted between the unimaginatively and unconvincingly staged fights, these scenes serve only to heighten awareness of just how dull the "new" footage is.

Corman, however, recently went back to the Kung Fu-future for *DRAGONFIRE* (New Horizon 1993). Formula is everything in exploitation filmmaking, and not wanting to miss a trick, *DRAGONFIRE* employs the most popular ingredients of martial arts films. First, the revenge motif: "You killed my teacher/mother/father/sister/brother/family/friend. Now I kill you." The other is the "To the death" tournament popularized by Van Damme (again) in the present day title, *BLOODSPORT*.

The main character goes to Earth, courtesy of more *BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS* scenes,

(thankfully this is the only stock footage in the film), and arrives in a low-rent *BLADE RUNNER* industrial-city where his brother, a despised champion of the popular pit fights, has been murdered. He trains and enters the matches himself to find the killer. The film may hold some sort of record for the number of fight scenes, but what elevates it above its brethren is a sense of humor and a decent cast.

*NEMESIS* (Imperial 1993) and *KNIGHTS* (Paramount 1993), both covered in *IM* #1, rate a brief additional mention as the latest offerings from the man who started it all, Albert Pyun. *NEMESIS* adds elements of the literary cyber-punk movement, and a few dashes of *ROBOCOP*, to a non-stop orgy of bullets, bombs, and borgs. The film also marks the first major theatrical release (400 theatres) of a Kung Fu-future film since *CYBORG*. *KNIGHTS* is memorable largely for a look reminiscent of John Ford westerns and for the first distaff Kung Fu-future lead, Kathy Long, a five-time world kickboxing champion and Catwoman stunt double. Despite the film's non-ending (reportedly, the production ran out of money) no sequel is planned or expected.

The recent *TC 2000* (SGE/Universal 1993) depicts the future as an unlivable hell thanks to pollution and ozone depletion. Beneath the surface a militaristic society exists

in comparative comfort. Their paramilitary police keep surface dwelling "breakers" from entering the sub-surface world.

There are a few marginal titles that, in the hope of completeness, I'll mention. *CYBORG COP I* and the upcoming *II* (both Vidmark) and the Lorenzo Lamas title *FINAL ROUND* (Worldvision) both imply a futuristic setting, but in viewing, these elements are few. If this is the future it is literally "the day after tomorrow." A real oddity is *DRAGONFLIGHT* (Warren Home Video 1990) which is basically an unfinished fantasy film cobbled together with some tacked on footage of a high-kicking Michael Pare in a low rent future.

The onslaught continues, however, with the upcoming *FIREPOWER*, featuring British kickboxer Gary (KNIGHTS) Daniels and Chad McQueen (yes, his son) as cops battling a futuristic underworld kingpin. Then there's *CYBERTRACKER* (PM video), which takes Don "The Dragon" Wilson on an unprecedented third journey to the Kung Fu-future. Here it's a future where cyborg "Core Trackers" exact the sentences of the United States Computerized Judicial System. Data in, death out. Wilson is an innocent Secret Service agent framed and convicted by the system and barely one step ahead of the titular killers.

The best Kung Fu-future title to date is a largely unconnected sequel to Pyun's foundering creation. In fact, Vidmark released director Michael Schroeder's *CYBORG II* (reviewed elsewhere this issue), but aren't currently involved in his already in the works sequel, (you guessed it) *CYBORG III*. Last, but far from least, the master of disaster himself, Albert Pyun, is already signed for *NEMESIS II*, a likely '94 theatrical release.

Like most DTV titles, none of the Kung Fu-future titles mentioned are great films. In fact, only *CYBORG II* could be classified as good. They are a nice counterpoint to the excesses of a *LAST ACTION HERO*. They are no stupider than *CLIFFHANGER*, no more unimaginative than TV's *TIME TRAX*, and the majority of them deliver the goods that their fans are looking for, and that's not a bad coda for any genre.





**DEMON KEEPER** had a demon added in post-production. Unlike **CURSE OF THE DEMON**, it stunk to begin with.

## DEMON KEEPER

Director: Joe Tornatore. New Horizons Home Video. 90 mins. R. With: Dirk Benedict, Edward Albert, Katrina Maltby, Mike Lane.

A must see for film students and serious scholars. No, you won't learn anything about making a good film, but this is a fascinating example of trying to save a botched effort in the editing room and only making it worse. Apparently, this was intended as a subtle haunted house effort about a phoney medium (Albert) who successfully tries to summon a demon when his latest client arrives with a noted debunker of fakes (Benedict). The premise (clearly stated in the dialogue) is that this entity has no form of its own and can only wreak havoc by possessing its victims through their own inner psychological weaknesses. In other words, this film was originally to be about the characters' inner demons of the mind as much as any spirit from hell. But the characters are so poorly written, and their actions so blandly staged, that the effort to create a subtle suggestion of the supernatural, along the lines of **THE HAUNTING**, failed utterly. So what was Roger Corman's solution when the turkey was delivered to him? Never one to give up on a project, Corman had John Carl Buechler "film" a demon makeup, which was then awkwardly edited into the proceedings. The addition is laughably obvious, for two reasons: first the demon never appears on the sets where the original footage was shot; second, the new scenes were done on video tape and run through the "film-look" process, with less than good results. Even without these technical difficulties, the approach was doomed to failure, thanks to far too literal dialogue which has the demon sound less like a tempter than a bad director ("Now pick up the knife and stab your husband.") In any case, the original cut couldn't have been much better, with characters who constantly separate so that they can more easily be picked off one by one.

○ Steve Blodrowski

## RAY'S WORLD: Fred Olen Ray on DINOSAUR ISLAND

By Mark A. Altman

While many actresses have earned the label of Scream Queen, it is in no small part thanks to the efforts of low-budget movie-maker Fred Olen Ray—the man behind the throne, so to speak—that they have achieved this regal status. Ray's films are often populated by a multitude of these reigning Hollywood Scream Queens, and his latest production, **DINOSAUR ISLAND**, is no exception. However, he is the first to insist that their fan following does not necessarily translate into a financial windfall for filmmakers attempting to strike a deal with prospective distributors. "It's hard to say, because in my mind they don't have any," he says of their marquee value, contradicting a common misperception perpetuated by other magazines. "They are good for some magazine publicity, and there's certainly a contingency of kids that like them; but when you go to a distributor,



Femme fatale Michelle Bauer lures the king of Dino Island into a trap.

having one of these girls is like having no star at all. There was a time when people thought if you put Linnea Quigley in a movie, that was enough to carry it. There may have been a short period of time when that was true, but there's a handful of films starring Linnea that can't get a release. It's not her fault; if they had an additional star that the buyers knew, these films might have gone.

"**TEENAGE EXORCIST** has the same problem," he continues. They had all these people in there that they thought were stars, but they were really supporting players. They needed a real name Hollywood-type star. They are kind of cult stars, aren't they? The buyers and the distributors don't understand that. That's why magazine publicity has never really been important to me, either. Having articles about your films in magazines doesn't help sell them. It's nice; it's an ego-stroking kind of thing; and you like to see the films get coverage. But it doesn't help sell the film to the public. I've never found that people know anything about it."

Many of these transactions, during which production companies and foreign sales agents hawk their wares to overseas markets, occur at the annual American Film Market in Santa Monica, where it is important to have star power or big budgets to heighten interest in a product competing against thousands of other similar efforts being shopped by competitors. "People at the AFM who buy films around the world don't know magazines like *Fangoria* exist," claims Ray. "My own agents had never heard of it, and the producers I work for don't know what it is. So *Fangoria* can say anything good or bad about you, and it doesn't matter. It doesn't operate at a level that influences the business end of making movies. Most of the girls tend to be put on a pedestal by the magazines and the fans, but in the real world they work for a regular rate. Even your top scream





## *This World should have remained Lost.*

### DINOSAUR ISLAND

A Wyn-Ray Media Production. New Horizons Home Video. Directed and Produced by Jim Wynorski & Fred Olen Ray. Executive producer: Mike Elliott. Director of photography: Gary Graver. Editor: Wayne Schmidt. Special visual effects: Hal Miles. Live-action dinosaurs created by John Carl Buechler. Screenplay by Bob Sheridan & Christopher Woodin. Music by Chuck Cirino. With: Ross Hagen, Richard Gabai, Antonio Doran, Peter Spellos, Michelle Bauer, Tom Shell, Griffen Drew, Steve Barkett, Toni Naples.

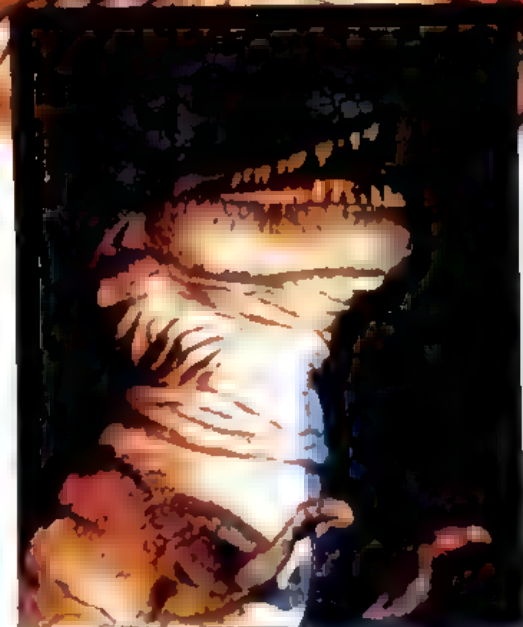
by Jay Stevenson

What can you say about a film with cheesy acting, cheesy effects, and cheesy story, except that it's, well, cheesy? Not too much, but a couple things do come to mind. The first is that I never thought I'd see a film which would provoke me to say, "You know, that's not good enough to be a Fred Olen Ray movie." In fact, it's easy to believe (as reported elsewhere) that collaborator Jim Wynorski handled 70% of the directing chores. Certainly, the film has all the elements we've come to associate with his style, which consists mostly of hiring non-actresses willing to disrobe on camera.

The plot, if you dare call it that, concerns some army guys whose plane crash lands on the titular island. Though the local barbarian



Separated at birth? Rex the Wonder Dinosaur in Corman's *DINOSAUR ISLAND* (above) bears a suspicious resemblance to the star of Corman's previous effort, *CARNOSAUR* (right).



queen (Toni Naples) wants to execute these intruders, they are relieved when it turns out that their arrival seems to conform to a tribal prediction that the island will one day be visited by gods. Needless to say, in the Wynorski universe, women are too stupid to distinguish between these schmucks and ancient gods.

In order to prove their divinity,

these sad sack soldiers kill off a few dinosaurs, which taxes their modern firepower to the limit, even though these women have been surviving on the island for centuries with nothing more than spears.

About now, you're probably thinking, "Hey, who cares about credibility?" Their answer is definitely not the filmmakers. Which is fine: there's nothing wrong with camp and spoofery. But to achieve this requires some humor that is actually funny, which is in short supply here. Rather than sending up or putting down dumb genre conventions, this film embraces them, then tries to excuse itself by pretending to be a parody. You can almost hear the filmmakers whispered excuse after each bad shot, stupid line, or inept performance: "It's supposed to be funny."

Humorous intent does not absolve one from doing competent work. A true parodist should be at least up to the level of quality of his target. Much of the charm of quaint old-fashioned genre turkeys is their sincerity. We may laugh nowadays, but we know these filmmakers were trying their best. If only we could say the same about this.

queens work for the same rate that any actor off the street would get. Some get a little bit more, and some of them haven't worked in years, if you stop and look at their careers. Basically, the conventions and magazines like *Femme Fatales* keep them alive."

What usually will help sell a low-budget, independent film is the caliber of the talent's resume, which is why you'll often see such former A-stars as Morgan Fairchild, Adam West, and David Carradine in independent films, along with the exploitable elements of the film's genre, particularly pervasive T&A. "A film like *DINOSAUR ISLAND* is going to be sold on the quality of its poster, its subject matter, and a five minute trailer where the buyers sees a combination of soldiers blazing away with machine guns and beautiful girls with spears fighting these prehistoric monsters that aren't too cheap-looking."

Although Ray has watched his budgets grow over the last few years, *DINOSAUR ISLAND* is a step back into the quick and cheap filmmaking which made his reputation. "This is the smallest budget I've had in three years, but it was worth it," he says. "The more they give you, the less you have to say. It's a trade-off. *INNER SANCTUM II* took a lot out of me; the first one did, too. It's great to have a video that makes all that

The women of Dino Island defend themselves with spears, so why do the macho army guys need guns?



money, but since I'm not in the loop for making the big profits, all I really remember is the experience, so it didn't matter that I had a hit. What matters is that it makes me sick remembering the making of it."

Those slightly bigger budgets have allowed Ray to work with more familiar "star" names such as Sandhal Bergman (*CONAN THE BARBARIAN*) and former *CHARLIE'S ANGEL* and *A VIEW TO A KILL* Bond girl Tanya Roberts. There are pervasive rumors regarding how difficult the latter actress can be. All Ray will say about her stint on *INNER SANCTUM* is that "With Tanya, it was very easy not to laugh. There wasn't anything funny about it. We all laugh about it now. It's like we almost drowned, and now we can laugh about how we slipped on that bar of soap at the end of the pier. When we were drowning, we weren't laughing."

As for the future, Ray would like to explore new territory, including the burgeoning frontier of family films. "I have a script I've been developing that I want to try out," he admits. "I may take it over to Concorde, because they have an affinity for family pictures right now. Ever since *HOME ALONE*, movies with child protagonists have been in. That's how I sold *STEPMONSTER* to Concorde: Roger [Corman] wanted something like *HOME ALONE*, and I just happened to have the right project at the right time."

Adds Ray of his first experience working for the legendary Corman, "That was the first time in my life when the check came attached to the contract before I even signed it. I simply pulled the check off, signed the paper, and handed it back to the runner. It didn't make a lot of money, but it got made, and that was what was important to me."



## CINEMA

By Steve Biodrowski

## THE IGNORANT PLOT:

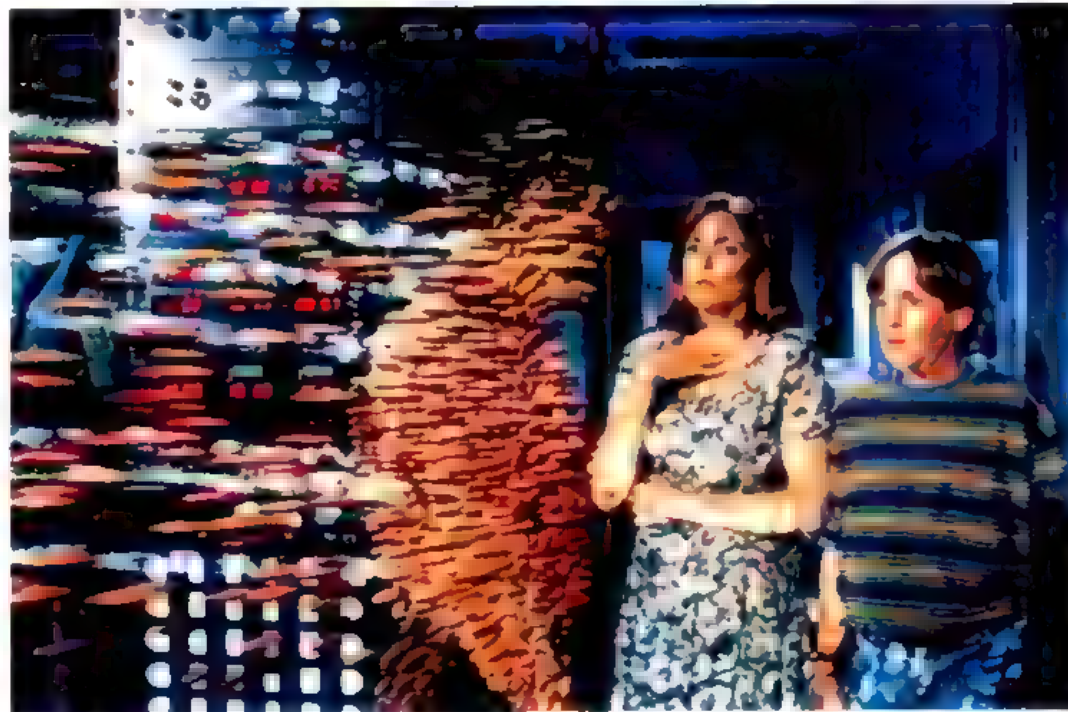
*Why are heroines unaware they're in a horror film?*

We have all heard of the "Idiot Plot," which can proceed only on the assumption that its characters are idiots who walk into every dangerous situation without considering obvious alternatives, such as calling the police. Beside this, we should add another category: the "Ignorant Plot."

Whereas a conventional structure follows a protagonist trying to solve some problem (e.g., Professor Van Helsing must destroy Dracula), too often today horror and science fiction writers present us with protagonists who are ignorant of their own story's premise. Instead of actively seeking to resolve some conflict, they are unaware a problem even exists; therefore, they wander through the movie, reduced to supporting players in their own star vehicle. The result is a film without narrative momentum, leaving the audience anticipating each next intrusion of the monster, whose violent rampages are the only relief from boredom. Thus, instead of dramatic conflict, the film's only appeal is a kind of sick voyeurism based on watching gory special effects.

Last year, three examples of the "Ignorant Plot" were particularly egregious, because they featured female leads. In all cases, the filmmakers perhaps believed they were making a feminist statement by elevating women from the traditional damsel-in-distress role; however, the attempts

Gabriel Anwar's character sits around looking beautiful in **BODY SNATCHERS**, barely noticing the events around her.



Karen Allen finally realizes she is battling a **GHOST IN THE MACHINE**.

backfired by portraying the characters as basically helpless, because they didn't know what was going on.

In **MAN'S BEST FRIEND**, Ally Sheedy is a female reporter who, like many in today's cinema, wants to graduate from fluff to hard news. In this case, her idea is to infiltrate a laboratory and videotape the appalling animal experiments therein. Like Pandora, her curiosity has devastating consequences: during her clandestine visit, she liberates Max, an experimental subject genetically engineered to be the perfect guard dog. Unfortunately, he is also prone to savage outbursts if not given a special drug at regular intervals.

The movie is stupid from the start. This supposedly brilliant scientist (well played by Lance Henriksen, fighting weak material) has never considered that people might not want a guard dog likely to turn on its master if not given an expensive designer drug. Besides this, we have a police force who dust the entire lab for prints after Sheedy's break-in but fail to notice the large video cassette box her camerawoman dropped on the premises. On top of that, writer-director John Lafia gets the proceedings rolling by having Max kill off a female lab assistant, yet the police blandly accept Henriksen's explanation that she never arrived for work. (How did Max get out of his cage? we wonder, and why hadn't he been given his fix?)

The real problem, however, resides in Sheedy's character, who has to be the worst excuse for a heroine in some time. Though she aspires to serious journalism, she never con-

siders showing her videotape to animal rights activists who might give some insight into what the doctor is doing. Furthermore, she never has Max examined by a vet, despite nasty looking scars on his body. (Question: if Max is a genetically altered mutant, why did Henriksen also need to perform vivisection on him? Probably Lafia thought the genetic angle didn't sound as morally reprehensible, and he was unwilling to make a film with any ambiguity.)

After this point, any ten-year-old could write the script. At regular intervals, Max kills bit players, but Sheedy is unaware of this while worrying about editing together her piece for broadcast. When she does take action, it is stupid action, such as hiding Max with an old friend who, it turns out, delights in torturing the animal, thus accidentally provoking another rampage. Against all Lafia's intentions, Henriksen starts to gain some measure of respect, if not outright sympathy, because he's trying to track Max down before he kills more people.

Along the way, we realize that this is a hopeless project, for an obvious reason: a realistic dog is just not very scary; therefore, Lafia has been forced to give us an unrealistic dog. It's a classic Catch-22: if the dog is unrealistic, then there is no suspension of disbelief and, again, no fear. Instead, we are mildly amused, as when Max swallows a live cat whole. We think, "Nice effects!" (No insult to the effects technicians, whose work is quite good, but when the story hasn't been set up to make you believe what you're seeing, then there is nothing you can do but marvel at the tech-

niques.) Even worse, we are contemptuous when Lafia reveals another impediment against Henriksen's turning this dog into a cash cow: Max's urine is so acidic that it literally melts a fire hydrant—not something most pet owners want in a guard dog, but it does allow for a gruesome opportunity when he urinates on a victim's face. (Was Lafia disappointed when Jeff Goldblum's Brundlefly was distracted from vomiting on a victim's face in **THE FLY** and inspired to do his variation on the theme?)

In the last act, Sheedy finally gets a clue as to what's going on, but even then she does little to help resolve the situation, basically acting as bait while Max offs the policemen guarding her home and knocks Henriksen into some electrified wiring (apparently one of Lafia's favorite methods of execution—he similarly dispatched a doctor in **CHILD'S PLAY**). If this is a woman for the '90s, then you *haven't* come a long way, baby. And just in case Lafia hasn't expressed enough contempt for his audience, he ends with a shot promising a sequel. Does he really think we want more of this dogshit? Let's face it: this is a film which probably exists only because of a typographical error. No doubt when he was typing up the initial premise for **CHILD'S PLAY** ("a slasher movie with a doll"), he accidentally hit a "g" instead of the double "l" and filed it away for future use. Too bad he didn't just throw the paper in the trash, as any good writer would do with his mistake, instead of putting it on film.

After **MAN'S BEST FRIEND**, **GHOST IN THE MACHINE** seems relatively benign—or, let us say, simply misguided. The film genuinely wants to portray Karen Allen's working mother as its heroine, but it can't resolve the essential contradiction in its premise. The character is completely phobic about computers, and she is being pursued by a dead serial killer whose mind has been encoded in a mainframe computer. In other words, she is completely unequipped to meet the challenge facing her, so she must rely on the help of computer-knowledgeable men.

We can forgive her ignorance as a plot device and expect to see her overcome this handicap (actually, she never does, but that is the set up, and it could have worked had it been carried through). What we can't forgive is that, again, the character is ignorant of the killer pursuing her; the



deaths of her friends seem like horrible accidents. This structure seriously diminishes the suspense by reducing the victims to mere plot points: they die so that Allen can figure out what's going on. Instead of registering as emotional trauma, each death becomes an eagerly anticipated step in awakening this ignorant protagonist to the reality of what's happening.

Also, it's a bit discouraging to see that Rachel Talalay, a female director, is so willing to be one of the boys when it comes to genre conventions. Allen's character is a heroine not by virtue of competence or panache but by virtue of being virtuous; that is to say, she is sexless, which is usually the best way for a woman to survive to the closing credits of a horror film. Although a mother, she is divorced, and from her one (bad) date we see, it's obvious that sex is a thing of the past. On the other hand, Talalay serves up a nymphette babysitter who willingly opens her blouse in front of Allen's son in exchange for a few bucks. Needless to say, such shameless behavior guarantees immediate execution.

The third recent example of the Ignorant Plot is Abel Ferrara's remake of *BODY SNATCHERS* (previously reviewed, in rough-cut form, in *IM 1:1*). The central premise of Jack Finney's fine novel is that the local doctor, Miles Bennell, is trying to figure out what mysterious phenomenon is affecting the people he has served all his life, subtly altering his home town into a bizarre caricature of what it used to be. In Ferrara's mishandling, we have a young woman (Gabriel Anwar) moving into a completely unfamiliar new home. Talk about ignorant: there is no point of comparison for her, so she doesn't even know that the population is changing! As with Sheedy and Allen, her ignorance keeps her on the sidelines, while the pods overrun the playing field.

Little more would need be said about *BODY SNATCHERS*, except that it does segue into another topic of interest: the problem in recreating old stories for a new generation. Don Siegel's *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* had the obvious advantage of being first. Phillip Kaufman's remake cleverly placed the same story in a different setting, giving a new perspective. If the first was a metaphor for a communist invasion of small-town America, the second dealt with fear of the dehumanizing effects of living in the big city. But the third has no central metaphor at all. If Ferrara had really wanted to update the story for the



What if the Addams family had to fight off *BODY SNATCHERS*?

'90s, he would have set it in Los Angeles, where we have real body snatchers. We call them Scientologists, but they're lurking on Hollywood Boulevard, eager to snatch unwary victims who surrender their minds to the group's brainwashing.

The real problem with doing a *BODY SNATCHERS* scenario lies in the premise of an individual fighting group conformity. It is a powerful idea but also a wildly contradictory one. There are few, if any, true non-conformists; when people claim to be, that usually means they are simply conforming to a different set of norms, usually those of some minority group. Thus, hippies in the '60s might not have looked like middle-class businessmen, but they did look a lot like each other.

For a new *BODY SNATCHERS* to work, one would have to find a protagonist who could truly be a unique individual, but Hollywood likes heroes with broad appeal, which means they have to be conventional. This is a contradiction not easily resolved. And, to paraphrase an old saying in modern terms, "no one is an island." Anwar's character is an outsider only by virtue of being new in town; other than that, she is no more non-conformist than any average young woman.

Off hand, the only fictional character who comes to mind in this regard is Suzy McKee Charnas's lone wolf vampire, Professor Weyland. In her intriguing collaboration with Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, the novelette "Advocates" in the anthology *Under the Fang*, Weyland finds himself in a world overrun by more conventional vampires, with whom he insists he has nothing in common, because they were once human while he seems to have always been a vampire. ("I loathe the whole squabbling lot of you," he tells Yarbro's le

Comte de Saint Germain.) Without friends or loyalties ("I understand the concept, but I don't see the point of making a fetish out of it"), he comes closest to being a complete outsider, one conforming to no group norms at all. If only we had a character like this in *BODY SNATCHERS*, we'd have a movie worth remaking.

All of which brings us, strangely enough to *ADDAMS FAMILY VALUES*, the disappointing sequel to the big commercial hit of a couple years ago. Critical reaction to both films hinged, quite understandably, on the weak plots. In the first, the novelty of the sight gags and the strength of the performances was more than enough to overcome this deficiency, but by the second film the momentum was definitely slowing.

The problem, of course, is coming up with antagonists when the lead characters are so weird. The greedy swindlers trying to usurp the family fortune in the first outing were adequate, but the black widow husband killer in *FAMILY VALUES* betrayed an air of desperation, as if the writers couldn't figure out what else to do. The answer, although no one seemed to notice, was in the summer camp subplot, which cast Wednesday and Pugsley as disenfranchised outsiders fighting pressure to conform to white upper-middle class values.

This is what the whole film should have been about. What the filmmakers haven't noticed is that the world is very different today from when *THE ADDAMS FAMILY* was on television. In short, Gomez, Morticia, and company no longer seem quite so strange as they once did. In fact, it's easy these days to go to Gothic rock clubs like Helter Skelter and Obituary, where the clientele are dressed and made up to look as if they could be members of the Ad-

dams clan (or supporting players in *The Vampire Lestat*). The appeal of Morticia and Gomez is their passionate romance and strong individuality, and it's easy for people in today's society to relate to that aura of non-conformity. Sure, you can dress in ghoulish glamour for a night on the town, rather like Halloween on a weekly basis instead of only once a year, but to live like that all the time—what a delirious fantasy.

So the antagonists should not be husband killers or greedy lawyers; they should be the forces of oppression and conformity, something that the Addams clan could battle with gusto. The best possible plot would be to make them the leads in a *BODY SNATCHERS* movie, filled with pod people who look like they just stepped out of the Eisenhower era, who want every neighborhood to look like *LEAVE IT TO BEAVER* and want every family to act like *FATHER KNOWS BEST*. The very title *ADDAMS FAMILY VALUES* seemed to promise something along these lines, and lord knows we've had plenty of conservative commentators preaching to us from their media pulpits about how we should conform to their concepts of proper standards for behavior. A large part of the appeal of the horror genre has always been a sort of illicit sympathy for the monster; in the comic context, we can openly embrace characters like the Addams. They could have been real heroes for the '90s, if placed in opposition to the right villains, instead of the dumb Hollywood plot device we were given. □

In *MAN'S BEST FRIEND*, Ally Sheedy ignorantly unleashes the beast that will cause so much harm.





## NEW BLOOD

By Randy Palmer

## CURSE OF THE DEMON

*It's not just about devil cults and demons.*

CURSE OF THE DEMON found its inspiration in a short story by M.R. James. In actuality, not much survives from James' subtle spin on Satanism except the characters of devil cultist Dr. Karswell, Professor Harrington (the protagonist of the short story who is the film's first victim), and the concept of "Casting the Runes" (the story's title) in order to place a hex. (There is no demon as such in the James piece.)

Interestingly, the film easily lends itself to more than a single interpretation. For years, fans have been unified in their commendation of CURSE OF THE DEMON as one of the genre's foremost examples of horror film art. Yet the character of Dr. John Holden could as easily be seen as a low-key version of the classic paranoid schizophrenic, making the film less of a horror story and more of a study in psychological terrors. In fact, viewers may recall that much of the film is concerned with Holden's initial reluctance to lend credence to Julian Karswell's claims of supernatural superiority. If we take Holden at his word, he is a person who is unafraid of the unknown. While he says "it's easy to see a demon in every dark corner," he never admits to being frightened by such a vision, which, by the tone and circumstances of his remark, we understand to be a reference to a childhood fear that he has overcome.

Joanne Harrington (Peggy Cummins), the niece of Professor Henry Harrington (Maurice Denham), who was killed when he backed his car into a power line outside his house, is attracted to Holden physically but repelled by his perpetual condescension. ("Please don't treat me like a mental patient. I also majored in psychology.") When Joanna claims her uncle was killed by a supernatural being, Holden scoffs. He is a man who believes only in the "seeable and touchable"; he is also so frightened of finding out what is really lurking in the dark corners of the world that he has adopted a single-minded vigil against any possible manifestation of the paranormal.

The classic debunker of the devils and demons the rest of humanity is not so sure about, possessed by an impulse to disprove any and all claims of the supernat-



In CURSE OF THE DEMON, skeptical Dr. John Holden (Dana Andrews) learns to accept the supernatural. But is he finding truth or descending into paranoia?

ural, Holden feeds on reality to the exclusion of all else, ultimately letting his compulsion lead to a spiritual downfall. Unable or unwilling to live like the rest of us, Holden sidesteps rationality in order to prove its very existence. How normal is a man dedicated to the study of a world he insists doesn't exist? ("I've made a career studying it...") In the long haul, Professor O'Brien (Liam Redmond), who refuses to deny the existence of evil as a manipulative force, seems to have a better grip on corporeality.

In the wake of Harrington's death, Dr. Holden initiates an investigation into the workings of the devil cult and soon becomes the target of Karswell's wrath. Using an ancient tome called *The True Discoveries of the Witches & Demons*, Karswell invokes a demon to destroy Holden at a pre-appointed time. Most of the film is concerned with the slow erosion of Holden's grip on reality. By the end of the picture the doctor is not so sure there aren't dark forces at work in the world.

Isolating several of the film's sequences leads to some interesting conclusions about its characters. In the opening sequence, Professor Harrington confronts Karswell in the latter's stately mansion, pleading for the sorcerer to "stop this thing you've started." Harrington seems to be suffering from a terrible delusion. (In this interpretation the supernatural is not a factor.) Karswell takes this opportunity to bolster his reputation as a master of magick in superbly subtle fashion: "Do you

still have the parchment I gave you?" he asks. The question presupposes the existence of magic as a force that can be directed and controlled. When Harrington admits that the parchment was burned accidentally, Karswell mutters, "Oh, I see," and sends him packing. If there is any other way of helping the exasperated fellow, Karswell is discounting it.

When Harrington sees the hell spawn stalking him through the trees outside his home, we must either accept the unbelievable (this *Bis* for real), or recognize that Harrington is a victim of Karswell's mind games. The demon could be a hallucination brought on by psychosis. (If Harrington was not psychotic before, certainly Karswell's constant threats and tricks have taken their toll.) In his panic, Harrington backs his car into a power line and is electrocuted.

If Tourneur meant for us to take the demon seriously, why have Harrington back his car into a power line? Why not just have the demon pluck him—or his car—off the ground and destroy him in its fiery grasp? Compounding the circumstances surrounding Harrington's death is a police report (mentioned later by Joanna) that indicates the professor's body was "mutilated horribly." A demon could have done this of course, but so could a wild animal, as Joanna herself admits when quoting the report. In fact, every single event that suggests the possibility of the supernatural at work in CURSE OF THE DEMON is buffered by a completely mundane

condition, statement, or event that suggests these are merely strange coincidences, or the products of diseased minds focusing on fabricated myths of magic and monsters. Harrington was electrocuted; Holden hears strange sounds, which, he admits, were only "running through his mind"; the medium, Mr. Meek (Reginald Beckwith), is just a voice impersonator; the thunderstorm at Karswell's Halloween party is merely the result of a bizarre windstorm; and so on. In the picture's creepiest segment Holden is chased through the woods outside Karswell's home by an enormous ball of smoke and fire. Joanna, who believes Karswell's demon is the real McCoy, later pointedly asks, "What did you run from in the woods," but Holden is steadfast. "Oh, some trick gadget that Karswell rigged up," he replies unhesitatingly, admitting that he "fell for the bait like an idiot." Everything that happens in CURSE OF THE DEMON can be explained rationally—just like real life in our own dull little world.

Tourneur's ability to set the stage for multiple interpretations of events in CURSE OF THE DEMON allows the viewer to pick and choose which story character to identify with. There is Joanna Harrington, who believes Karswell's powers are the real thing; there is Holden who thinks just the opposite (until later, when he's not so sure); there's Mrs. Karswell (Athene Seyler), who panders to her son and takes us wonder whether she's as crazy as he is, and if there's more going on in this relationship than there ought to be, and there's Karswell himself, who is either a lunatic or one helluva con artist. Holden believes Karswell to be a bit of both, and he's probably right. When Karswell cautions his mother about "the power of black magic," she nods patiently with a simple, "Yes, Julian," as if trying her best to placate a madman. Who would know better than she?

Of course, you can forget identifying with Rand Hobart (Brian Wilde), the farmer whose mind is in a state of total collapse because of something Karswell did or showed him. Hobart is a backwoods lame-brain who probably believes in witches, demons the tooth fairy and Santa Claus, too. As Holden himself



points out early in the film, "If you want the key to Karswell's phony supernatural powers, check the psychological makeup of some of his followers." If Hobart is indicative of the average cult members, it's no wonder Karswell is able to wield power over these people.

As the film nears its conclusion, Holden's grip on reality falters, and he becomes just another victim of Karswell's power. Whether Karswell *really* has the ability to cast spells and conjure demons from the pit doesn't matter, because he has convinced Holden that he can do exactly those things. The viewer can choose to believe Karswell or not, and this is the whole point of the film: it doesn't matter whether the evil is real, imagined, or just a series of oddball coincidences. Whether Karswell is killed by his own pet demon (the hex backfires when Holden returns the cursed parchment) or an onrushing train isn't important, because the result is the same.

Depending on your preference, the last few lines allow viewers to side with rationality or irrationality. Looking down at the crumpled man on the train tracks, a policeman decides that "the train must've hit him and dragged him." A lone dissenting voice ("I thought he was on the other side, sir.") is overridden by the same cop's "Look at him, Simmons! The train *must* have hit him!" Ah, the Tourneur touch. We can almost "see" the mutilated corpse, although the film shows us no more than a steaming body lying perpendicular to the metal rails. Dana Andrews' John Holden sums it all up best, of course: "Maybe it's better not to know," he suggests. □

## JACK PALANCE

continued from page 51

You've got a gun, and you're killing, either way."

So much for that topic. I'm starting to feel sweat dripping down my arms. It seems like hours have elapsed, though from the amount of tape on my recorder, it's been only ten or fifteen minutes. Even the unit publicist is shifting uncomfortably.

Finally, taking pity on me, she tries to bring this torture to an end by standing and saying, "They're probably waiting for you in makeup." I, too, rise, and apologize for taking so much of his time.

"Don't worry about that," he states in a commanding voice, motioning for us to sit. "If you have any questions, go ahead. You haven't asked very many. If you're going to do an interview on me, you have to ask questions."

Obviously, he wants to talk; I just haven't found the right topic. I throw it up to him: "What would you like to talk about?"

"No, no, no," he laughs. "That's putting the cart before the horse."

"Well," I fumble, "I asked what you're doing tonight, but you said you weren't sure."

"I read the script, but until I get on set and see what he has scheduled, I don't know for sure. Michael has a good imagination."

Another potential topic: what the director brings to the film that wasn't in the script. "Has he stuck pretty close to the script, or does he make a lot of changes on set, coming up with new action for you?"

"God, I've only been here one night."

"Has there been anything particularly challenging about working on this film?"

"No."

"Isn't that a little unusual for a film with a limited budget, when you have to work long hours with only limited resources?"

"I'm not in those troublesome situations. I'm all eyes and mouth."

I've had all I can take. Trying to return his stare, which has so far kept me transfixed, I insist upon letting the makeup crew do their work on him.

As if apologizing for our departure, the unit publicist assures Palance that we will be on set to watch him perform. The actor notes this, apparently without ascribing any particular importance to it.

Outside, the fresh ocean breeze helps wash away the tension that has built inside me throughout the interview. I take a deep breath of salt air as Michael Schroeder walks over and starts asking about the interview. "What did he have to say? Does he like the film?"

I barely hear him. I'm suddenly struck by a vision. I see myself sitting behind a desk somewhere, working as an editor and assigning other writers to visit locations and conduct interviews with taciturn stars. This vision is more than a little appealing, and somehow I know that I won't miss these set visits a bit. □

## CYBORG 2

continued from page 50

definitely a director's medium. As long as people support me and love my dailies, I can just about do what I want. I'd like to continue doing that but on a larger level. I know I have to prove myself. Once you've directed a couple of good movies, it all boils down to the box office. The more box office you make, the more power you have in Hollywood. I'm just trying to keep the integrity of my work at a high standard, because I know the rest of it will come in time."

Despite two CYBORG films, OUT OF THE DARK, and MORTUARY ACADEMY, Schroeder wants to avoid the genre tag, pointing out that he's made other kind of films as well. "I consider myself a complete filmmaker—that I could take a story and visually make it an interesting experience. Quite frankly, I'm bored with explosions and stuff. I'm much more interested in story and dramatics, and I love to use the effects and stunts to propel the story along." □

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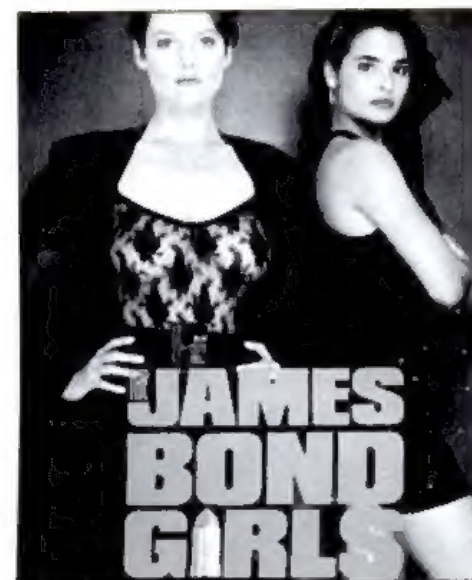
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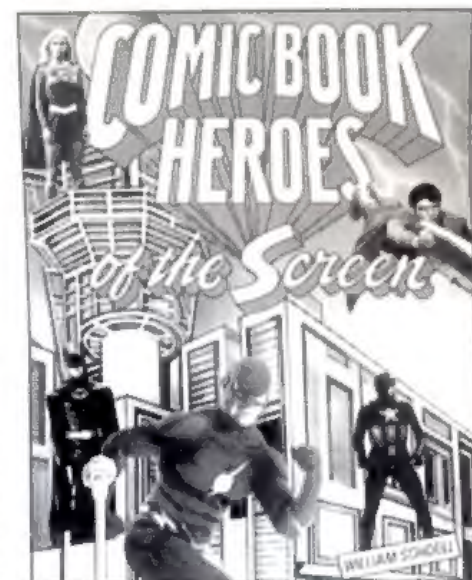
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# LETTERS

## APOLITICALLY CORRECT?

Just a short note to tell you how much I enjoy *Imagi-Movies*, with one exception: the infusion of politics into the magazine. The "Point-Counterpoint" columns in issue #1:3 were at least balanced discussions of a political topic in the context of how the genre views it. However, Mark A. Altman's comment about being spared a Republican presidency on page 60 of the same issue is nothing but a cheap shot, inappropriate and offensive. If the review had been published in *The New Republic*, I may have found it amusing, but in *Imagi-Movies* it was terribly out of place. I really like the magazine, especially the article on UROTSUKI DOJ and the profile on Barbara Steele, but please keep the rhetoric out.

Duane Eilf  
Pinconning, MI

[Sorry, but we try to analyze the genre in as much depth as possible, and sometimes that means taking a political slant.]

## CANCEL MY CANCELATION

Ignore my request of two months ago to cancel my subscription (unless Issue #1:3 was a fluke?) Issues #1 and #2 had too much Stephen King (enough already) and too narrow a focus on this genre.

But Issue #3—YES, YES, YES: H. R. Giger, Barbara Steele, Haunt Couture, Jeffrey Combs, video reviews, and no more bad-mouthing *Femme Fatales*! Keep it coming; have some fun; and leave the in-depth Stephen King articles to those "other" magazines. I'd rather read about writers whose work becomes enjoyable movies.

P. Carrillo  
Walnut Creek, CA

## VIDEO OUTLAW SPEAKS

Great magazine! I really like your attitude as an editor, and I like that you have a place for the little producer as well as the big guys. Recently, however, I was alarmed to find a review of one of my features in your magazine, written by a fellow Kansas Citian named John Thonen.

John called me "incompetent" and trashed things that are actually quite good about the movie. On ZOMBIE BLOODBATH, we had over 700 local extras, and I handled all of them as well as the actual actors and a 40-person crew. It was

made for under \$2500 cash. If I could do all of that AND build a huge press campaign as starting point to launch my company into the big time, I hardly think I'm "incompetent."

My company has become a major force in Kansas City. I have done 15 features. Sure, my first 10 stunk, but they showed progression. With budgets as low as mine, I was doing something amazing just by completing a feature at all! I have grown with each picture, and on my newest one [MOONCHILD] I will put my critics in their place. I have learned what it takes to make a feature work, and I am finally ready to add to this genre that I love.

I have no beef with you or your publication, and I will continue to buy it, but I felt I had to send you a fax on this subject. We really wanted an article in your mag, but we all felt you were too big for our small-budget stuff, so we've been holding off until we could perfect our craft before calling. Many people felt like throwing away your mag and never buying it again after that (one actress asked if you even cared what he said), but I told them to keep buying it, and I commended you on not censoring what John had to say, because everybody is entitled to their opinions.

It's a shame because, otherwise, it was your best issue yet, even better than *Femme Fatales*! I love the fact that you won't support actresses who only pose semi-nude for photos. I agree that all actresses should get the same treatment, in lingerie or not. Keep up the good work, and many happy issues to come!

Todd Sheets  
Kansas City, MO

## WANTED: LETTERS LIKE THIS

*Imagi-movies* continues to evolve into the best new genre film magazine available. It's not as mainstream as *Cinefantastique* has become, nor as pompous as *Starlog* or *Fangoria*. Please, keep your course straight and true, and you'll be doing your readers a great service.

As a long-time fan of H. P. Lovecraft's work, the articles in *IM* 1:3 on NECRONOMICON, Jeffrey (RE-ANIMATOR) Combs, and "Cthulhu Who?" were especially enjoyable. I agree that most film adaptations of Lovecraft are awful, but I

still remember being scared out of my wits as a kid after seeing THE DUNWICH HORROR on TV.

Your cover story on artist H. R. Giger was great. Just when I thought everything that ever needed to be said about Giger, ALIEN, and ALIEN<sup>3</sup> had been printed, along comes this major piece on Giger and his work in films. And you can bet I'm hoping they open a Giger Bar in New York City real soon.

"Haunt Couture" was fascinating. Designer Lisa Temming's work is delightful! The accompanying photographs were stunning. It was a real treat to see such genre stars as Florina Kendrick, Debra Lamb, Lisa Blount, and Martine Beswicke in Temming's fashions. Temming is strikingly attractive in her own right and could easily replace Angelica Houston as Morticia Addams. Those losers over at *Femme Fatales* need to learn that beautiful women are just as beautiful with their clothes on as with them off—especially when you have a sexy lady like Cameron around.

Jon Zuchowski  
Jersey City, NJ

I just wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed *IM* 1:4. I have given up reading about films I haven't seen yet, because it spoils them too much for me. Although you did have coverage of WOLF and other films not yet released, #1:4 also had a lot of articles about obscure stuff I'd already seen, and I read more in this issue than I have in the last couple years of *CFQ*.

Judith P. Harris  
New York, NY

It is with great delight that I write to congratulate you on your splendid publication. *Imagi-Movies* fills the abysmal gap between dry academic writing and sophomoric gore fanzines. I am especially impressed with your efforts to treat subjects in depth and to add to the critical discourse on popular culture and society. Presently, I am teaching media studies, screenwriting, and contemporary folklore at an alternative school, and I am a summer lecturer at the University of Regina. *IM* is sure to be quoted often in my future classes! Thank you once again for a thoroughly enjoyable read.

Patricia Moir  
Regina, SK, Canada

## MORE RETURN RAVING

Dean Turner (Letters, *IM* 1:4:62) was lucky to see the theatrical release of RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD III. It never did show up in or around Minnesota. After watching it on video, I can see why—because it was good. Apparently, Trimark's policy of producing sequels must also have included sabotaging any potential their movies might have had. In the future, could *Imagi-Movies* do a story on the success or failure of Trimark's genre sequels?

Michael Rollins  
Pemberton, MN

I read with great concern the letter in *Imagi-Movies* #4 from the poor bastard in Midlothian, Texas (the name alone evokes a vaulted, eldritch inbreeding worthy of Lovecraft), who evidently experienced a perfect moment watching Brian Yuzna's lamentable RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD III. That anyone past the age of 15 could employ as superlatives such puerile idioms as "killer," "kickass" (not once, not twice, but thrice), and "spec-fucking-tacular" without a trace of irony is spookier than anything committed to celluloid by crapmeister Yuzna and company. Should we arrange for a caseworker or just rally a torch-bearing throng to find this internal Midlothian and burn the miserable hamlet out of existence? Your call.

Richard Harland Smith  
New York, NY

[*IM* must remain a neutral observer in matters of this sort. Like the Talamasca, "We watch, and we are always here."]

## ERRATA

An unfortunate computer error sent a portion of the Nick Park interview (*IM* 1:4:56-57) into cyberspace, creating a rather ungrammatical sentence: "The first is a sequence wherein the penguin uses Wallace, in the TECHNO TROUSERS steal an uproarious chase atop a model train." The text should have read as two separate sentences comparing two highlights of THE WRONG TROUSERS: "The first is the sequence wherein the penguin uses Wallace, in the Techno Trousers, to steal a diamond from a heavily guarded museum. Park then tops that with an uproarious chase atop a model train."



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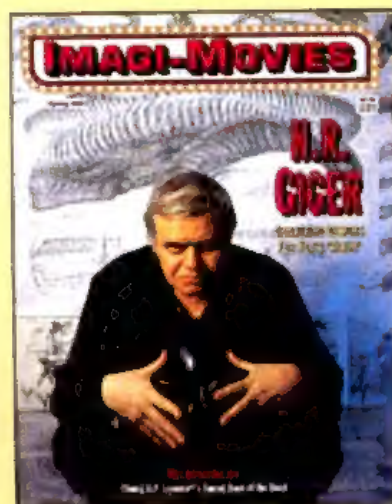
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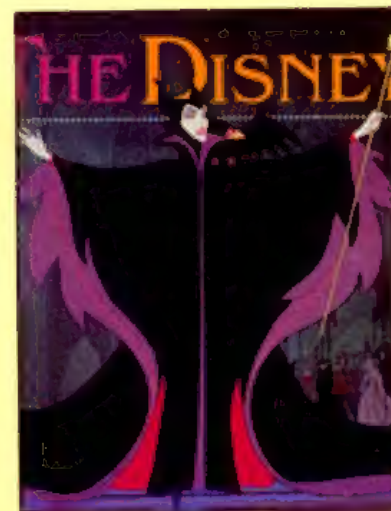
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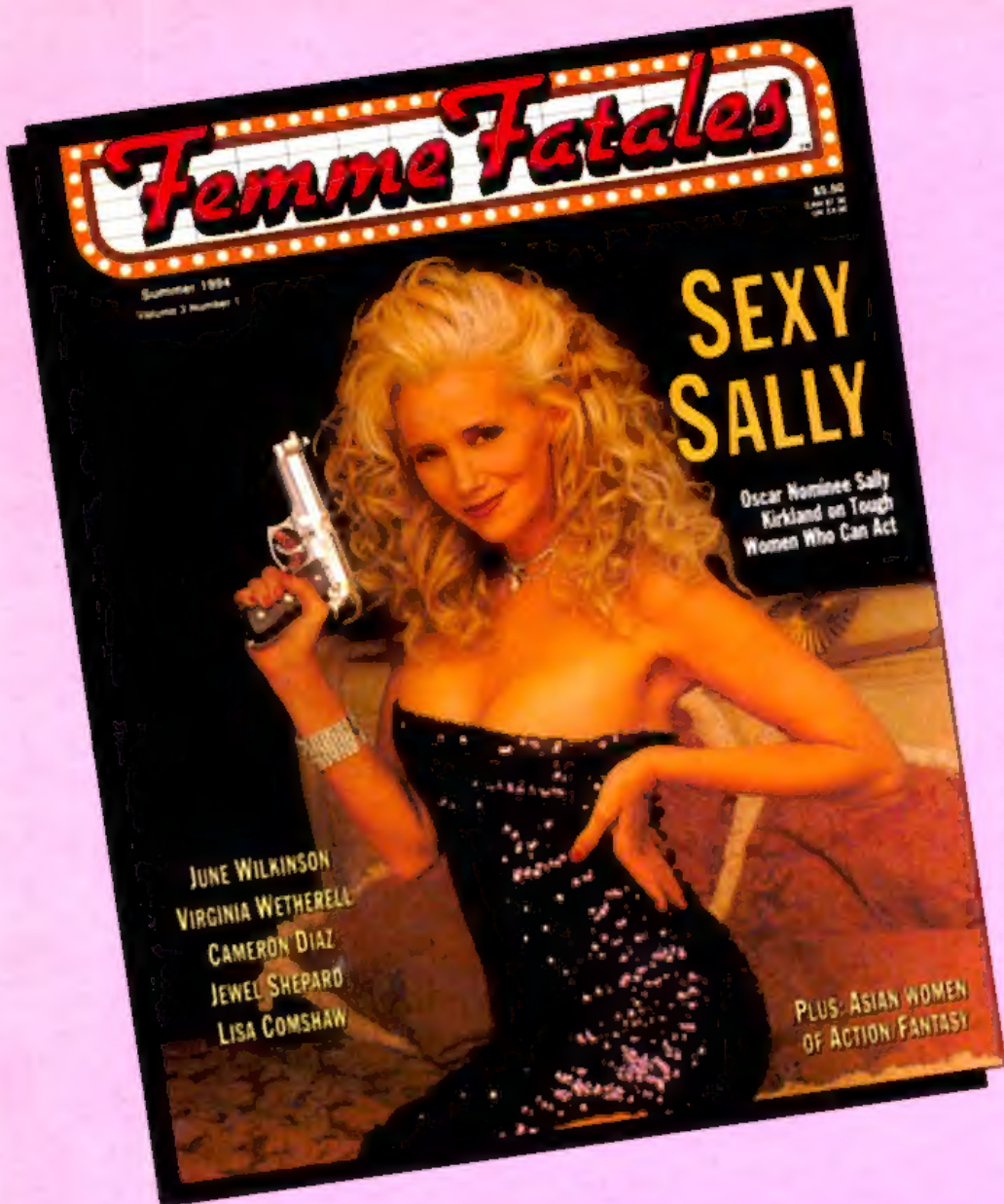


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Here's what you can expect in our next exciting issue: A colorful, candid behind-the-scenes conversation with Sally Kirkland on how the erotic thriller "steam queen" began her career in movies like *BIG BAD MAMA* and *CANDY STRIP NURSES*; Asian actresses of horror, fantasy and science fiction: the Orient's B-movie bombshells mix it up with shows of sex appeal and strength; an interview with Kathleen Turner—13 years after her film debut, the tantalizing Turner still generates plenty of *BODY HEAT*; *ABDUCTED II: THE RE-UNION*, fresh from its triumphant debut at Cannes, filming a '90s version of *THE HILLS HAVE EYES*, but this time around, three comely women get the upper hand.

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